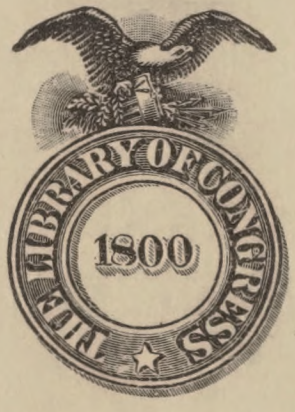
THE PRETTY WAYS O' PROVIDENCE

MARK GUY PEARSE



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The Pretty Ways o' Providence

By

MARK GUY PEARSE



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THE PRETTY WAYS O' PROVIDENCE.

The Pretty Ways o' Providence.

I.

They were an old couple when I knew them. It was from him that I heard the story. To her the years had brought no added gift of speech; a look, a smile, a breath sufficed for assent, or dissent, or surprise, as she sat knitting by the fireside. But he with the years grew garrulous—a little merry-hearted man with twinkling eyes, the very embodiment of good humor.

The story was of years ago when she was Nancy Penrose, and he was Henry Craze—he the servant man at a farm some three miles from the church-town, and she housekeeper to an old farmer living a mile nearer to the village, where stood the church and a score of clustering cottages. No words can tell the story half as well as Uncle Henny's own.

"Now to my thinking, you know, there is

nothing in the round world so pretty as the ways o' Providence. I 'm not a-going to run down all the pretty things to prove it. I do n't like that, not a bit—a-stripping all the other gooseberries off the bush to make believe there is only one in the world. Bless 'ee, I 've found little gooseberries so sweet as big ones—'specially when I could n't get any others."

Old Uncle Henny chuckled with good humor, his little eyes almost shut up out of sight by the wrinkles that curved around them as he smiled.

"No; there it is—the prettiest thing in the world, and none the less because there 's such lots of pretty things. I do agree, certainly, that stars and flowers is just so pretty as God Almighty could think of. And I like to put them together, stars and flowers. Flowers, to my mind, is a sort of stars 'pon earth, and stars is a sort of flowers in heaven. Stars is the flowers of the night, just like flowers is the stars of the day. Why, I 've seen an old furze bush blaze out with gold fit for the celestial city, a-filling the air with that sweet warm

scent that I 've a-laughed for the joy of living to smell it. A sunset from the cliffs, and a summer haze 'pon the moors is things that heaven itself is n't going for to beat. But for all that, you can't put them alongside of they pretty ways o' Providence."

Then Uncle Henny laughed, his eyes twinkling as if some new thought occurred to him. He stretched out his hand and laid it on my knee, then pointed across to the chimney-corner where Nancy sat knitting. She, wondering at the pause in her husband's flow of speech, caught sight of the finger, and then of the sly look on her husband's face.

"There 's another thing, now, that if you do come to look at it, you could set alongside the flowers and stars, and neither the pretty cheeks of her nor the dear eyes of her would be put to the leastest little bit o' shame."

She turned with a smile to me, a look which meant that I was to make allowances for her Henny's ways—it was no good saying anything.

"But for all that, I do n't put Nancy first

of all. And I do n't believe she is jealous, bless her! Of all things that ever was or ever will be, the prettiest to my thinking is *they ways o' Providence.* 'T is wonderful! I 've thought about it hundreds of times, and argued it out along with myself, and I always say it, and I always will, there is n't nothing to set alongside o' that. I do n't exactly blame anybody for not seeing it the same as I do, but I do wonder that they can help it. Of course, we 've all got our own way of seeing, and 't is n't given to any one man to see everything. Thoughts is things that is allowanced out amongst us—one got one set, and another got another, the same as our teeth and our tastes. But I am fine and glad that I have a-got the set that can see this. Whether 't is church or chapel, when they begin to thank the Lord for 'creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life,' I always feel that there 's something left out, and I always put it in on my own account—*and for they pretty ways o' Providence.*

"Now, look at it, there 's Nancy and me come together—that is wonderful, if you like.

It do take away my breath with amazement for to think about it. She and me. Of course, you see in a minute the wonderfulness of it, do n't you?"

Uncle Henny turned to me. I could but answer doubtfully:

"Well, where is the wonder?"

"Aw dear, to be sure; I did think you would see that in a minute."

He sat back in his chair, almost grieved for a minute or two. Then drew himself up again and went on in a tone that was almost a protest against my dullness of vision.

"Why, what I can't get over is this: why was n't I born back there in they old days along with Nebuchadnezzar, and Methuselah, and Abednego, and Melchizedek?"

Uncle Henny lumped them together as if they all lived at the same time, if not, indeed, under the same roof.

"Of course I might. Or there was they days that I 've heard tell of, when the old Britons went about in suits of paint, all red, and white, and blue, like a flag to the stern

of a man-o'-war. To think of it! Why was n't I born back there along with they? And she, bless her, she might have come along in a thousand years' time,—and where should I have been then, and what should I have done then, I should like to know. Aw dear! my blood do run cold to think of it! There 's a wonder, if you mind to. If it was for nothing but that, the first prize for pretty things must go to they ways o' Providence. There 's nothing to set alongside o' that."

"Ah! I begin to see it now," I ventured to remark, in hope of soothing the old man.

"Begin to? And that 's all anybody can ever hope for to do with a wonder like this. There 's no ending to it. It do stretch away backward and forward, upward and downward, for ever and ever. Wonderful, wonderful!"

Uncle Henny staid for a moment, as if almost oppressed by the weight of it.

"Well, talk about thousands to one, it was millions to one that she and me should ever have come together. You think now. Why

was n't she living over there in furrin' parts—out in America, somewhere—and me over in Palestine or China? I 've looked it out on the map to see how far away we might have been, and never a chance of coming together, she and me. Aw, they pretty ways o' Providence!"

Nancy lifted her eyes and looked at me with half an apology, fearing that a matter so personal would fail to have any interest for me. I nodded and smiled. Uncle Henny might go on as long as he liked—I could listen. She looked a little "Thank you," and went on with her knitting.

"And all that is only a sort of beginning. I never think about it but I can see something new—another side to the wonder of it. I sit here a-looking upon her, the dear, and I say to myself, 'Now, why was n't she a empress or a queen?' That 's what I want to know. Aw, my dear life: I think I can see her, all dressed up so fine, a golden crown upon her head, and the robes about her shoulders, and the lords and ladies all standing around her.

Aw dear, dear! what would poor old Henny Craze have done then? Never so much as able to get in for to look upon her! To think of them sweet ways o' Providence that made she so pretty a maid in a cap and gown, a-milking of the cows, and a-making of the butter, just a-waiting till I come along for to find her. 'T is wonderful, wonderful! There 's nothing like it—they pretty ways o' Providence."

II.

"WELL, that 's only the beginning of it still. Why, she and me might have been all the days of our life here in the same parish, and the farms a'most touching each other, and yet we might never so much have a-come together for all that. It was a Watch-night service that did it. I believe I 've read how that it was made in Germany. Well, all I can say is, that there 's lots of things made in Germany that are not half so good as that. Provi-

dence knew what He was a-doing when they were first put on. I dare say they folks over there never thought it was anything more than a sort o' pious way to end the old year and begin the new, and never fancied that it was a part o' they pretty ways for bringing us together.

"Well, we was both of us up thirty years of age, and had never so much as met. You see, Nancy could only get out in the morning on a Sunday; and I had to see to the farm stock and things, so that I could only get away in the evening. To think I was only a mile off, and never so much as knew that she was in the world! And there was me a-going about all day a'most in sight of her window, the dear, and she never so much as knowing the name that was to be her own."

Nancy lifted her eyes and looked at her husband, a look that told how deeply she shared in the wonder, though she said so little.

"So you see, being all as it was, the Watch Night was the only chance of our coming

together. To think of it, she and me a-sitting so close together, she and me a-singing the same hymns, and kneeling both side by side, and for all that she was just so far off as if I was up in the North Pole, where 't is all frost, and she was down in the South Pole, where I s'pose 't is all sunshine. Bless her! it always was sunshine where Nancy Penrose was—that I *do* know, anyhow—and is still."

Nancy bent over the stitches, but I think it was rather to hide a blush than to count them. Then Uncle Henny grew more excited.

"That night at twelve o'clock the hour had come. Providence had a-timed it all so pretty as could be. I had come out o' the service, and was setting out for a brisk walk home, when I saw her a dozen yards ahead o' me, walking as fast as I was. It was a sharp, frosty night, that set the stars a-shining and twinkling, a sort of winking at each other like as if they knew what was up. There 's wonders in the stars, if you come for to think about it. They was all wide awake and watching that night. I 'm certain sure of that,

for there was something on that was worth their while.

"Well, I was walking along like as if there was never a maid in all the world, my mind taken up with the service and thoughts about the new year. You know the road—how it comes down the hill for quarter of a mile or so after you come out of the church-town, then there 's a bridge across the stream, where the trees are. 'T is a lonely place at the best of times, and to-night was quite dark. There 's a stile there to the right hand that leads in over the fields and cuts off a brave bit of the road. I had forgotten all about her, the dear, never thinking but what she had turned into one of the cottages and was safe enough at home by this time. The night was still—never so much as a breath of wind to stir the branches of the trees.

"All of a sudden I heard a drunken fellow's brutal speech and then a scream. I ran on as fast as I could, and in the darkness I could just make out a great big hulking rascal, hiccoughing between his oaths, and swearing

that she should not cross the stile unless she gave him a kiss. He had taken hold of her with one hand, and was putting the other around her waist.

"Aw, they pretty ways o' Providence! For I was no sooner there than she dragged herself away from the fellow and came right up to my side, gasping and trembling all over.

" 'Stand back!' I says to the rascal, giving him a shove. Of course, in a minute he made for me.

" 'Get over the stile so quick as you can,' I whispered to her; 'I 'll keep this fellow from touching you anyhow.'

"I was never much of a fighting man, and he was a great big chap who could have finished me with one blow. He come staggering on with so many oaths as his mouth would hold. I can not help laughing to think of it, for as he come with a rush I stepped to one side, and as he went by I gave him a shove with all the strength that was in me. Aw, they pretty ways o' Providence!—down he went, clean down the bank, head-first in the bram-

bles and furze bushes. I knew that it would take him long enough to pick hisself up again, so I slipped over the stile along by her side. But there! what with she a-waiting for me to say something and me a-waiting for her to begin, between the two of us there was n't so much as a word until we come to the gate of the farm-house where she lived. Then she stopped a minute.

" 'Thank you,' says she, a-looking up at me, the starlight a-shining in the pretty eyes of her.

" 'You are welcome,' says I, thinking how much I would like to do it for her over again.

" 'Good night,' says she, a-turning in to the gate.

" 'Good-night,' says I, a-going on my way.

" 'Well,' says I to myself, 'I never did think much about marrying, but if I ever did have a wife, I should think myself lucky to have anything so pretty-looking and so pretty-spoken as that.'

"You would hardly believe it, but there! if

they pretty ways o' Providence did n't give me a chance of finding out before long that she was there to be had if only a man knew how. Bless her, the dear! she never told me, but I should n't wonder a bit—it would only be fair play—if they pretty ways o' Providence did n't give her a chance of finding out so much about me.

"Well, it come along to the next Watch-night service, and there was she and me again. I made sure of that so soon as I got in the place. When it was done I thought, of course, that there might be another of them drunken chaps about. I did not exactly want 'em, but I did sort of wish for *one*—just one; so I walked up so bold as a lion.

" 'Beautiful night!' says I.

" 'Beautiful!' says she.

"And there, what with my a-thinking what to say that was pretty enough for her to hear, I never so much as said a word. When we come to the gate I made so bold as to hold forth my hand. She gave me hers, and I thought I should like to hold it forever.

"'I do wish you a happy New-Year,' says I.

"'Thank you,' says she; and I thought I never heard such pretty music in my life. 'I wish you the same,' says she. Then she was gone.

"Well, I thought I would try and write her a letter, but I did n't. 'It is impudence of 'ee to think of it,' says I to myself—'downright brazen impudence, you to set yourself alongside anything like she is!' But, for all that, I did think it was a pity they never thought of putting up them Watch-night services once a week.

"But they pretty ways o' Providence was n't going wrong—no, they was leading right up so straight as a line. It is wonderful—wonderful!

"The next Watch Night come round at last—for all it was like two years a-coming round that time—and so soon as we come out I was up alongside of her in a minute. The moon was full and there was n't so much as a cloud in the sky, so that I could see her sweet

pretty face. We went along together, but never a word could I get out. When a man have n't got nothing particular to say, his words will come with a rush, like a hailstorm; but only let him have something particular upon his mind, and there is no such awkward and tongue-tied creature upon the face of the earth. For all my heart was telling me to speak up, I could not so much as find a thing to say. We had come to the gate a'most before I knew we were over the stile.

"It was she, the dear of her, that put forth her hand that time. Then with the feel of it I sort of woke up. I took it so tight as ever I could. The moonlight was shining down upon us, and there was me a-shuffling first one foot and then another, so clumsy as could be, and a'most before I knew it I out with it:

"'*Shall us?*' says I.

"She bent down her pretty head, and all so faint as the chirrupin' of a little bird, says she:

"'*Lev us,*' says she.

"Aw, they pretty ways o' Providence! There 's nothing to set alongside of them."

MAN'EL HODGE'S COURTSHIP.

Man'el Hodge's Courtship.

I.

Man'el Hodge—he was christened Emmanuel—was now forty years of age, and began to think that it was time to get settled in life, which meant that to his other worldly possessions he should add a wife. It took him at least a year to come to any well-defined opinion on the subject.

It was Tamson Gundry who first suggested it, and she had half a dozen marriageable daughters of her own at home.

Man'el was coming slowly along the field path near to his house when Mrs. Gundry overtook him.

"Good-mornin', Man'el," she began.

"Aw, good-mornin', Mrs. Gundry," said Man'el, turning towards her.

"Which way are you a-going, then?" she asked, thinking she would walk that way too.

"I be n't going nowhere," replied Man'el.

"But you must be going somewhere, Man'el," laughed Mrs. Gundry, who was a quick-witted woman, as all the parish knew.

"No," said Man'el, in his slow and melancholy way, "I 'm coming back from where I been to."

There was a pause. Then Mrs. Gundry began again.

"Man'el, you got a tidy little place of it here."

"Iss, Mrs. Gundry; might be worse, to be sure."

"A good house and pretty garden."

"Well, if you do come to think about it, I suppose it is." And Man'el looked as if it had never occurred to him before.

"And your own and all—no rent nor nothing."

"Iss, 't is my own, I believe." Man'el never seemed to be quite sure of anything.

"And these here three meadows—you 'm quite a landowner."

"Well, iss, I s'pose, so far as it goes—

might be more of it, though," said Man'el, scratching his head.

"And so good a flock of sheep as anybody could wish for to see."

"Well, iss—but there might be more of they too, and no harm done."

There was another pause. Then Mrs. Gundry turned from leaning on the gate and looked him full in the face.

"And you 're a tidy man, Man'el, when you mind to—Sundays and berrin's and fair days—when you 're dressed up."

"Well, iss, I s'pose there 's better, and I s'pose there 's worse," and a ghost of a smile flickered about his lips.

"Well, Man'el, I tell 'ee, there 's one thing you do want for to set 'ee up."

"What 's that, then, Mrs. Gundry?"

"Why, a *wife*."

"To be sure," said Man'el, and he scratched his head again, it helped him to collect his wits. "But I never thought about it—dear, dear—*a wife!*"

"Well, good morning, Man'el."

"Good morning, Mrs. Gundry."

Mrs. Gundry had gone some fifty yards when she turned and called back: "You think about it, Man'el."

"Iɜs, I will; good morning."

One has seen beside the shore of a lake, a birch-tree bending down to find itself reflected in the still waters below, yet rooted in the cleft of a rock where seemed no soil, no nourishment, no possibility of life. Such was the unpromising ground into which Tamson Gundry's suggestion had fallen, yet there, too, had come the unfolding of the seed and its growth, until Man'el could see but one thing whichever way he looked. All that he had was undone for want of a wife. House and land and flock of sheep and Sunday attire seemed less than nothing without a wife.

But it was one thing to come to the starting-point of a great decision, and quite another to begin to act upon it.

"Take a wife?" mused Man'el. "'T is aggravatin' talk, terrible aggravatin'—like as if they grow'd upon the hedge like black-

berries to be had for the pickin'! 'T is the terriblest job I ever come for to think about," and Man'el perspired at thought of so tremendous an undertaking.

Then it was that he turned in his perplexity to old Zacchy Tregeare, a man of experience in these things, whose three wives lay amicably together in the same grave, their names duly inscribed on the same tombstone. And Zacchy had observed with some satisfaction that there was room on the stone for yet another name in addition to his own; not seriously observed it, but it had occurred to him while standing at a neighbor's funeral.

It was one evening when the day's work was done that the pupil made his way to the professor.

"Zacchy," began Man'el, "I 've come for to see 'ee."

"Glad to see 'ee, Man'el," puffed Zacchy, as he lit his pipe; "sit down, will 'ee?"

" 'T is serious, Zacchy," said Man'el, poking his stick into the turf on the hearth.

"To be sure," grunted Zacchy, seating

himself in the chair and leaning back in the attitude of a lawyer for whose opinion a client waits.

"'T is about a woman."

"Aw, who is it, then?" and Zacchy put his head on one side and half closed his eyes.

"You see you 've a-had experience."

"Buried three of 'em," grunted Zacchy.

"However did 'ee manage it?" said Man'el, lifting his eyes to the master whose art he so admired.

"Manage it! Well, it do n't want no managing when they 're dead, poor dears."

"No, no; I mean to the beginning."

"Aw; to the beginning. Well, you 've a-got to marry 'em first of all—one to a time, of course."

"Iss, of course; but before marryin'?"

"Why, you 've a-got for to court 'em."

"That 's terrible hard work, I s'pose," sighed Man'el.

"Not if you do understand it."

"But if you do n't?"

"Well, then you can't, I suppose; 't is a

thing that do want understanding, to be sure."

"Could 'ee teach anybody, Zacchy, seeing you 've a-had so much experience?"

"Well, maybe I might try, Man'el; iss, I might try."

"Do 'ee, then," and Man'el poked his stick into the turf again.

Then Zacchy sat up and leaned on the arms of the chair as if ready for business.

"Have 'ee got anybody in your mind?"

"No, not particular," said Man'el.

"Dear, dear," puffed Zacchy: "you 'm a terrible long way off yet."

"Women folks be like a passle o' sheep to me," said Man'el; "I can't never tell one from another."

"To be sure! Well, well!" and Zacchy's tone was one of amusement. "Why, there never was any two of 'em alike if you only got the understandin'—no two of 'em alike." And Zacchy's thoughts wandered over the years of his experience.

"There 's Tamson Gundry's daughters,

they might be one, iss, the whole lot of 'em might be one and the same maid for all I can see," and Man'el sighed. "If I spoke to one this evening I should not know which one of 'em it was to-morrow."

"Aw, dear," said Zacchy, while a smile circled his lips but did not betray itself in his tone, "that would be a terrible job to go courtin' six maids to once, and thinkin' all the time it was only one."

"Terrible," groaned Man'el, prodding the turf more vigorously.

"Well, there 's a cure for that, I reckon," said Zacchy, drawing the stem of his churchwarden from his mouth and puffing a cloud of smoke.

"Do 'ee think so, Zacchy?"

"The moral of it, so to speak, is this here, go where there is only one—only one—and then you can't mistake."

"Iss," said Man'el, as if that did not avail him much unless the one could be found.

"Can't 'ee think of one all by herself,

Man'el, just *one* for to begin with? Come now, do 'ee try."

"They 'm all alike to me," sighed Man'el, " 'zackly alike."

Here was a deadlock, and the lesson seemed ended, when Man'el began again:

"I 've set my heart 'pon it, Zacchy,—can't 'ee think of nothing?"

" 'T is melancholy," said Zacchy, thinking how easily he could have managed it.

"Iss, and a comfortable little place of my own and all," said Man'el; "you would think there might be one woman, somewhere, would n't 'ee?"

"There 's lots," grunted Zacchy.

"But I only want *one,*" gasped Man'el, and he wiped his head in a fright at the host that seemed to rise up and cluster about him at Zacchy's words. "Can't 'ee think of *one?*"

"Well, Man'el, there 's no knowing what I might do if I give my mind to it."

"Thank 'ee, Zacchy," said Man'el in a tone of much relief as he rose to go. "I 'm very much obliged to 'ee. Good-night."

So ended the first lesson, and Man'el went on his way to his cottage. "It do seem a terrible job," he sighed, "and yet to think 'most everybody can manage it somehow."

II.

IT was a few days after when Man'el was busy scraping the steaming carcass of a pig that Zacchy came upon him.

"Aw, Man'el, my dear man, if you did but understand! Such chances as you do throw away for want of understandin'!"

"What is it!" cried Man'el, looking up, frightened, and wondering what he had done.

"Hog's puddens!" grunted Zacchy, "that 'll fetch 'em. There is n't a bait for a woman that do come near to hog's puddens, not in my experience."

"And you 're terribly experienced, too, Zacchy. How do 'ee use it?" And Man'el asked, as if doubtful whether it was to be taken inwardly or to be rubbed in as a lotion.

"Aw, dear, dear," groaned the professor of the most delicate of arts. "Can't you see? For a present, to be sure; that 's how I always began with them, and it never failed, not once. Wrapped up in a white cloth, and be sure 't is clean—women have got eyes like a hawk for so much as a speck of dirt. Then you lay it in a basket all so neat and pretty as can be, and you put in alongside a bit of Boy's Love and a few Sweet Williamses, and a little note pinned to the cloth with your name upon it—Zachariah. Be sure to put your name writ out full length; 't is terrible solemn and impressive-like as if you meant it, and you got to be fine and careful about the spellin', which is the advantage of Scripture names, 'cause you can copy it out of the Bible—*with Zachariah Tregeare's Compliments.*"

"Aw, my dear life," groaned Man'el, " t' is terrible difficult, and when you do n't know who to send them to and all."

"Iss, 't is the fetchinest thing if you only do it right," Zacchy went on, heedless of the interruption, "and 't is a pretty gift, too, if you

come for to think about it, is flowers and hog's puddens; something delicate upon top like a dream, so to speak, and something solid and substantial underneath. There 's a moral to it, and what I do call a emblem of the affections."

"But I can't think of nobody," said Man'el, as he bent over his work.

"Well, I 've a-gived my mind to it," said the professor.

Man'el looked up and waited. But Zacchy felt that a prolonged pause would add impressiveness to his words and lend a sense of greatness to his efforts.

"Who is it, then?" said Man'el at last.

"I 've been over all the parish in my mind for to find a likely missus for 'ee, Man'el."

"But you have not a-spoke to anybody, have 'ee?" gasped Man'el.

"What are' ee thinking about, stupid?"

"I did n't know," said Man'el; "you had so much experience."

"Well, I was thinking there was Miss Susan Kynance would suit 'ee."

"She 's dreadful old, is n't she?" sighed Man'el, in a disappointed tone.

"Not as old as you be, I believe," sniffed Zacchy.

Man'el started. Somehow it never occurred to him that he was in any sense old, whatever other people might be.

"Well, to be sure! I s'pose she is n't, neither, but she do look it."

"So do you, Man'el, only you can't see it. Better a steady and thrifty female minding her work than a flighty maid that is all over the place; or 't is so to *my* thinking, anyhow," and Zacchy spoke as one whose superior judgment had been questioned.

"Iss, Zacchy, of course, of course; what with the cows to milk and the butter to make, and the fowls to feed, and the victuals to cook, and the pigs to see to, and a man to look after, it would take her all her time, would n't it?"

"She 's a thrifty woman and have put by a bravish lump, too."

"Well, Miss Susan is a woman I do respect," said Man'el.

"Respect," cried Zacchy with a snort—"what 's the good of that! You 've got to *love* her or nothin'."

"Aw," said Man'el, hopelessly.

"Iss, 't is love or nothin'."

"How do you know when you got it, then, Zacchy?"

"Know?" cried Zacchy, "know! How do you know when you got a ragin' fever upon 'ee consumin' your vitals day and night?"

Man'el stopped and gasped. "It is n't like that, is it?"

"You 'll know right enough when you got it, and so will everybody else, for all you think you 're keepin' it all to yourself."

Poor Man'el was alarmed. "Do it affect your appetite, Zacchy? I 'm a terrible hand for my meals."

"Well, that 's a good sign for love," said Zacchy, "when you do play with your vittles and forget they 'm there."

"Then I 'm feared I must give it up. I could n't go without my vittles not for nobody livin'," and Man'el shook his head.

"And you do lie awake by night thinkin' about her?" Zacchy went on, regardless of Man'el's feelings.

"I could n't do it, Zacchy—I could n't come to it. I do sleep all night and never so much as turn till daylight. It is n't no good."

"Well, that is love, Man'el. And it do make anybody that quick to see what a woman do want that 't is like as if you 'd been trained to it all your days. And it do teach a man such pretty ways o' doing things that you do n't hardly know yourself."

"I 'm a terrible awkward chap," sighed Man'el, "and I may so well give it up to once."

"Iss, love is a wonderful smartener to a man, love is—'t is like the sun to a garden bed."

"There is n't no chance for me," said Man'el, and he finished his scraping. "You have n't spoke to nobody, have 'ee?"

"No, of course not. But it will come if you give yourself fair play, bless 'ee; it will come, love will, like flowers out of a hedge-row, and bloom upon a thorn bush, give 'em a

bit of sunshine and a breath of south wind. And that 's what a woman do bring to a man. You set your mind upon it, Man'el, and think about her till I do see 'ee again." And Zacchy went his way.

As the thread about which the solution crystallizes, so to Man'el was the thought of Miss Susan Kynance. He saw her as he moved about the house, with thrifty and skillful hands controlling its affairs; she came to greet him smiling at the door. More and more her presence grew familiar until he became almost impatient at times to secure that of which at other times the mere thought overwhelmed him. Such were Man'el's perplexities when Zacchy came again, for the pupil lacked the courage to go to the professor.

"Have 'ee thought about her?" Zacchy began.

"Iss, Zacchy. I 've kept my mind steady upon her for a week, and 't is terrible serious."

"Well, you must make haste and begin then."

"What, say something!" gasped Man'el.

"No, not exactly *sayin',* but just let her see that you 'm thinkin' about her a bit."

"How, then?" said Man'el.

"Well, there 's a tea-meeting next week, and you can sit up alongside of her, and see that she have all she want for to eat and drink. And put in something pretty if you can think of it."

"I never could, Zacchy, I never could," groaned Man'el.

"Nonsense, it will come right enough. You must give yourself a chance."

Poor Man'el! never had any ordeal seemed so terrible. All through the week he went to and fro, carrying a burden on his shoulders that crushed him.

" 'T is wearing my life away, Zacchy, and I can't stand it," he sighed, when next they met.

"Nonsense," laughed Zacchy: "we 'm all like that to the beginning."

When the tea-meeting came it was Zacchy's care that brought it about so that Miss Susan

found herself seated at the table with Zacchy on one side and Man'el on the other. But poor Man'el thinking it would show his respect for the lady, and finding it easier in this way to hide his bashfulness, turned his back on her the whole time.

"Well, Man'el, how are you?" asked Miss Kynance, presently.

"Good-mornin'," gasped Man'el, looking over his shoulder, with a mouth full; "I do mean good-evenin'." Then he choked and coughed violently.

"Will 'ee have some cake, miss?" ventured Man'el, later, handing the plate over his shoulder.

"Thank you, Man'el; Zacchy keeps me well supplied."

" 'T is very good of 'en, I 'm sure," said Man'el, in a tone of infinite relief.

There was a long interval of silence.

"Gone to sleep, have 'ee, Man'el?" cried Zacchy at last. But Man'el was too absorbed for the question to reach his ears.

It was gently repeated by Miss Kynance.

"Zacchy wants to know if you are asleep, Man'el."

"Asleep?" he cried, rubbing his eyes, "well I think I was nearly, miss—you see, I was up all night with the old sow, and it do take it out of anybody, that—and—and thinkin' about things."

"And I told him to say something pretty!" whispered Zacchy to himself. Whereupon he made up for Man'el's neglect by handing Miss Susan some more cake.

Afterwards the professor and the pupil met, the master snorting with scorn, and the poor pupil overwhelmed by the utter failure.

"Zacchy," said Man'el, "this is the terriblest job that ever was; it is n't no good, not a bit, and I may so well give it up."

"Man'el, you may. You have n't got the understanding of a mouse. Why, there is n't not one of God's creatures on the face of the earth but do understand it better than you. See how the birds will get theirselves up in a new suit of feathers and come out in their smartest and sing to their mates like as if they

was burstin' theirselves with music. And you, the melancholiest-looking chap a female could set eyes upon, and so ugly and awkward in all your ways as a toad. I can't teach 'ee nothing. And Miss Susan so fine and thrifty a woman as you could find, and a tidy sum of money put by and all. I never could have believed it if I had n't seen it. 'T is a terrible thing when a man do n't understand."

"I 'm afraid I shall never get over it, Zacchy," said Man'el.

"No, I 'm afraid you never will."

"Well, Zacchy," pleaded Man'el, timidly, "do 'ee think you could do it for me, with your experience and all? If you was to tell her for me."

Zacchy looked doubtful.

"I 'll send 'ee some hog's puddens for her," said Man'el.

"Well, mind the Boy's Love and Sweet Williamses."

"Thank 'ee, Zacchy, I won't forget."

It was some days later that Tamson Gundry came along to Man'el's house. She had

seen it all. Women have in these matters some faculty denied to men, and know instantly each step of the progress.

"Well, Man'el, have 'ee heard the news?" she began.

"No, Mrs. Gundry, what is it then?"

"Why, Zacchy is going for to be married."

"Aw, who to then?"

"Who do 'ee think?"

"I 'm sure I do n't know," said Man'el.

"A thrify woman with a tidy sum put by and all. But can't you guess?"

"Live in the parish, do she?"

"Why, Miss Susan Kynance, to be sure."

"What a mercy!" cried Man'el, giving a great gasp of relief. "I am glad."

"Sent her some hog's puddens, did n't 'ee?"

"Iss, I believe I did," said Man'el, as if he had forgotten all about it.

"Put your name 'pon 'em, did 'ee?"

"Why, no; I tried, but I had n't got so much boldness to begin with."

"And she thought they come from Zacchy."

"Well, 't is very kind of Zacchy."

"You do n't mind then, Man'el?"

"Mind! Why, 't is the blessedest relief that ever was. I do feel like as if I could breathe again. I do count that Zacchy never did a kinder turn to anybody than he have done to me."

When Mrs. Gundry was gone Man'el went muttering to himself: "However could she come for to think that I should *mind?* Zacchy do know what to do for a man, he do—so terrible experienced and all, and 't is very kind of 'en."

III.

How it came about Man'el could never tell, not even think. It seemed to him that it had all come of itself—with no word spoken and nothing done.

He had never gone to take lessons, had never been put up to any methods, and yet there it was—the man who did not under-

stand, the man awkward in word and ways, the man to whom all women were as much alike as a flock of sheep—Man'el was going to be married.

It may have been quite accidentally that Mrs. Gundry happened to be passing Man'el's house, and staid to have a word with him as he was digging in his garden.

"Mornin', Man'el," she began, "you got some fine leeks there, I see."

"Well, iss," and Man'el lifted himself and rested on the spade, "I s'pose they be."

"Fine things for a pie, Man'el, and healthy, too, they say."

"Iss, if you do know how to make it," sighed Man'el, for whom a deaf old slatternly woman came in to do the cooking, whose chief concern was to save herself any trouble.

"Will 'ee have some, Mrs. Gundry?"

"Well, I 'll tell 'ee, Man'el; I 'll take some home, and Kitty shall make a leekie pie, and you come down to supper, will 'ee?"

" 'T is very good of 'ee, I 'm sure. I 'll come."

"Well, say about six o'clock, shall us, if that will suit 'ee? Good-bye for the present."

"Good-bye, and thank 'ee, Mrs. Gundry."

Ah, who can tell, as it should be told, the charms of a leekie pie? The crust all crisp and shiny brown, the gravy of a milky richness, the succulent and juicy vegetable, the tender bits of bacon here and there. If the leeks for which the Israelites lusted were put into a pie, he will find it hard to blame them greatly who, after a day's work, shall sit at such a supper as that which waited at Mrs. Gundry's house for Man'el Hodge.

Man'el thought he had never enjoyed anything so much in his life. The feeling of an infinite relief was still upon him, that he had not to consider his words and his ways. That was all gone forever, and now the very soul of him was flung with glad abandonment into the pleasure of the evening. The stupendous undertaking of trying to get a wife was at an end.

It was with the blessedness of a great free-

dom that Man'el sat in the cheery kitchen, where all was so bright and clean, and the very brasses and tins were polished like mirrors. It was a contrast with his own house that he could not but feel, yet he was too happy to trouble himself as to the cause of that contrast. About him were six merry maidens whose laughter was infectious, and over all was the cheery presence of the motherly old soul at the head of the table.

Man'el had finished the first plateful with evident relish.

"Have a bit more, Man'el?" said Mrs. Gundry, rising and cutting a crisp slice of the crust. "You 'm very welcome."

"Well, thank 'ee, Mrs. Gundry, I b'lieve I will. I never tasted nothing so good since mother died; she was a fine hand for pastry."

"Iss, your dear mother, she was that, Man'el. Kitty made this here, she 's a good cook, is Kitty; that one next to 'ee, 't is."

Kitty of the black curly hair and the merry

black eyes, blushed as Man'el turned to look at her.

"Well, mother herself could n't do it better, and I can't say more than that."

It was still daylight on that autumn evening when, the supper ended, they strolled to the garden in front of the house.

"They roses have got a lovely smell, to be sure," said Man'el, drawing down a heavy spray to enjoy the fragrance more fully.

"Will 'ee have some?" asked Mrs. Gundry, "you 're welcome, Man'el. Put one in his buttonhole, Kitty, if he do n't mind."

Pretty Kitty, with a roguish laugh, picked one and held it. "Perhaps Man'el would n't like it."

"Aw, I do n't mind," said Man'el; "they do smell lovely."

"Shall I pin it in for 'ee?" said Kitty, coming nearer.

"I do n't mind," said Man'el.

"Man'el likes leeks better, I b'lieve," laughed Kitty.

"Well, drawled Man'el, slowly, "come for

to think about it, I b'lieve I do. But I must be going home long."

"We 're fine and glad to see it, Man'el."

"You 'm wonderful good, I 'm sure," and Man'el was gone.

The mother and the maidens were busy clearing up the dishes and putting things away, when he came back and thrust his head in at the door. "I 'll give 'ee some more leeks if you mind to, Mrs. Gundry."

"Thank 'ee, Man'el, and Kitty shall make 'ee another pie."

"Take care of the rose," laughed Kitty.

"Aw, I forgot about that. Good-night."

So, Man'el went home under the sunset sky, blessing Zacchy again that the terrible lessons were done with. "I shan't never try to learn that any more; I ar' n't made for it," and Man'el shut the door for the night and bolted it.

It was but a few days after that Man'el came down to Mrs. Gundry's, and having

knocked at the door he opened it, and walked boldly in.

"Anybody about, is there?" he called.

"Yes, I 'm down here." It was Kitty's merry voice that called from the cool dairy with its slabs of slate where stood the pans of scalded cream. Here, with her sleeves rolled back over her arms, she was making the butter.

"I 've brought some more leeks," said Man'el, putting the basket on the floor.

" 'T is very good of you, I 'm sure. You 'll come to supper, of course, and we 'll have another pie," and Kitty's pretty face was turned towards him over her shoulder as she spoke.

It was a charming picture. The black hair that would break out in little wisps and curls about her face and neck, a face full of kindly humor, and a mouth that seemed made for rippling laughter; the pink cotton gown that she wore, protected for her work by a big white apron. The cool air of the place was fragrant with the sweetness of the milk and the cream. Everything was deliciously

clean. Man'el could not but feel the charm of the place, though unconscious, perhaps, of what made it. It was rather the charm of an atmosphere than of anything he could define.

"Your sister can make a lovely pie," Man'el began, in his awkward way.

"Sister!" laughed Kitty, "why, 't is me!"

"Aw, dear, dear! Women is all alike to me," groaned Man'el.

"Well, now Man'el, take a good look at me, and then you 'll remember me," and Kitty's merry eyes were turned towards him as she looked over her shoulder. "I am Kitty, cook and dairymaid and gardener—so now you know."

"I shan't know 'ee again, I 'm sure! 't is terrible awkward," sighed Man'el. Then, as if that were not of the slightest matter, he looked about the dairy. "What a pretty place you 've got here to be sure, and how nice you do keep it. I wish mine was like it."

"Why do n't you get somebody to look after it, then?"

"Well, so I would if I knowed how to, but

I do n't. And I can't learn it, neither—'t is n't no good tryin'. Do 'ee think mother could spare 'ee once a week for to see to the place?"

"What, as dairymaid?"

"Iss."

"I should want lots of wages," Kitty laughed, "there would be so much to do. However, if I could not come myself I could send somebody else—you would n't know, of course," and Kitty laughed again.

"No, I do n't think I should," drawled Man'el. He sat for a while watching the supple fingers as they squeezed the yellow mass and rounded it to proper shape.

"You 've a-got a pretty hand for butter. It do mind me of mother."

"Why, do n't you know I got the first prize for my butter three years running at the show?"

"To be sure! Well, well, you are clever."

There was a long silence in which was heard only the busy fingers as they wrung the cream to butter, whilst from the garden beyond came the happy music of the birds.

"Kitty," Man'el began, in his most melancholy tone, "'t is Kitty, is n't it?"

"Of course it is," laughed Kitty. "You 're terrible forgetful."

"I 've been thinkin'——"

"What about, then?"

"Suppose a man that did understand what to do and what to say, come along all so smart as the flowers and so bold as a lion, and asked you for to be his wife, what would 'ee say to 'en?"

"Law, Man'el, how can I tell? Why, it would all depend upon the man."

"What, upon how he did it, or said it?"

"No, of course not!"

"What, then?"

"Why, whether I liked him."

"And if you liked 'en?"

"Well," Kitty said, slowly, as she lifted her face and looked out of the little window into the garden beyond, whilst her hands lay idly in the butter, "if I liked him so well that I loved him I would tell him so."

"What would you tell 'en?"

"Why, that I loved him, to be sure."

"Aw."

The clock in the kitchen struck twelve and Man'el started. "I 've been here an hour," he cried, "and I thought it was only five minutes." He rose from his chair, stood for a minute, and sat down again. Then he began once more.

"His awkward ways would n't make any difference to 'ee, would it?"

"Not if I liked him well enough."

"You said *loved,* just now!"

"Well, loved him, then," and Kitty, as she spoke, plunged her hands deeply into the dish and worked away vigorously at the butter.

"Well,"—and Man'el sighed deeply—"s'pose he thought you was the nicest little maid he ever set eyes upon, and the cleverest, too, and could n't tell 'ee so, what would 'ee do?"

"Do?" and the laugh had given way to a more serious tone, "well, shall I tell 'ee?"

"Iss, do 'ee, please; I 'm longing to know."

"Tell 'ee plain?"

"Iss, so plain as ever you can, for I 'm a terrible poor chap to understand."

"You must wait a minute, then," and Kitty laughed again. "There, that 's finished," and she set the last pat of butter on the cool slab and then turned to wash her hands.

"What would 'ee say, Kitty," asked Man'el, impatiently, for Kitty seemed to be needlessly long wiping her hands on the towel behind the door.

Then she came slowly and stood close in front of him. "Man'el," she asked, and her voice was full of a great tenderness, "do 'ee really want to know?"

"Terrible bad."

"Well—if *you* was that man, Man'el, I would say"—and she hesitated for a moment.

"Do n't 'ee be hard 'pon me," pleaded Man'el.

"I would say," she began again, *"you 're the dearest old goose that ever lived."* Then, flinging her arms about his neck, she kissed him upon the forehead, and ran away out of the door and hid herself in the garden.

Man'el took up the basket as one dazed and went on his way. He had gone a few yards from the house when a voice called after him, "You 're coming to supper—six o'clock, mind!"

Man'el turned and called, "Kitty, Kitty, I do want 'ee."

But the door was shut, and Kitty was gone.

It was done. Man'el knew it all now. He sat at dinner, but all was untasted. He did not so much as know it was there until the deaf old woman came in to clear the things away, and he did not hear her then until she came close to him and shouted at his side, "Lost your appetite, have 'ee, master?" Then Man'el started, and hastily finished the meal.

All women alike! It seemed to Man'el that there was only one woman in the world—never had been any other, and never could be. Everywhere, in everything, in the heaven above and the earth beneath, he saw but Kitty's merry face, and heard the music of that voice, and that touch of hers still thrilled him.

He went forth to see the sheep, but he walked under a new heaven, and in a new earth. The sky must have been gray till now —the beauty of the blue he had never seen before, nor known the whiteness of the fleecy clouds. He staid to listen to the lark, and wondered that he had never learned before the rapture of its song. Never were buttercups so golden, and as he went he blessed the very daisies that looked up at him as if they loved him.

He staid to look at his watch. It must surely have stopped. Only *three,* he hoped it was five. He held it to his ear, it was going. It seemed a day, a week, an eternity before he could begin to get ready for supper.

With a care and smartness that he never knew before he prepared for the evening. His Sunday clothes were put on; and even they looked poor and shabby as he thought that he was to sit by Kitty's side.

It was half an hour before the time that he arrived at the house, where all were still busied in preparing for the meal.

"Why, Man'el!" cried Mrs. Gundry, as he came in at the door, "whatever have happened to smarten 'ee up like this here?"

" 'T is Kitty, I b'lieve," said Man'el with a smile that set his eyes shining and filled his face with a sunny glow. "Will 'ee ask her to come and pin a rose in my button-hole?"

"Like roses better than leeks, do you, then, after all, Man'el?" laughed Kitty.

"I do to-night, Kitty," said Man'el.

"Terrible sudden, is n't it?" said Mrs. Gundry, as she saw it all in a glance.

"Iss, Mrs. Gundry, and terrible serious, too."

* * * * * *

So Man'el was married before Zacchy had so much as thought about his own wedding day.

IV.

MAN'EL had been married only some few weeks when one dark night he and Kitty

chanced to be coming from her mother's house. The path lay through the fields and across two or three awkward stiles. It was at the last of these that Kitty fell, and was so hurt that she lay stunned and helpless on the ground.

Man'el took her up in his arms and carried her as best he could to the house, fearing that she was dead.

As soon as he reached home a messenger was at once sent off for the doctor, whilst another hastened to fetch Mrs. Gundry. Man'el carried Kitty upstairs and laid her on the bed. Then holding the candle over her, his own face as white as hers, he leaned to listen for her breathing, trembling from head to foot. She was alive. Man'el uttered a great gasp of thankfulness to God, and then could say no more. He sank helpless at her side.

The doctor was soon on the spot, but Man'el could give no account of the accident —seemed to hear nothing, to know nothing— sat only as one dazed and unconscious. It

was to Mrs. Gundry that directions were given as to all that should be done.

The doctor had come back again to the bed and stood looking at Kitty carefully. "Her only chance is in good nursing and in perfect quiet," said he. "It is the nurse that will save her more than the doctor. We must send for a nurse at once."

He had turned to leave the room, and had reached the top of the stairs, when Man'el followed and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"You must not send for a nurse, doctor."

"But, my dear man," said the doctor tenderly, "it is her only chance."

"No, you must n't," urged Man'el, "you must n't; I could not bear any hand to touch her but my own."

"O, that is all nonsense," said the doctor, annoyed, "I have arranged that with Mrs. Gundry."

Man'el's eyes flashed and his teeth were set. "A nurse shan't come nigh her."

"Then your wife will die."

"If anybody in the world can save her, doctor, I can," pleaded Man'el.

In place of the drawl there was a fierceness and determination that startled the doctor. The candle lit up his figure as he stood on the stairs; the stoop was gone, and Man'el stood upright, his head thrown back, his face at once all defiance and yet all entreaty, every feature aglow with the passion of his great love. Here was a man who would fight a thousand deaths.

"I do n't want to go against you, doctor, but she 's mine, and no one else shall touch her. I would give my life for her, if it has got to be," said Man'el.

The doctor felt that the matter must be arranged quietly with Mrs. Gundry. He had settled it all with her, and then, before leaving, came again up the stairs and noiselessly entered the room. He found the candle carefully screened, whilst Man'el in his shirt sleeves was settling the pillows for Kitty's head with the skillful gentleness of a mother. The doctor went down again. "Mrs. Gun-

dry," said he, "I think we can do without the nurse after all. You and Man'el will manage."

"Man'el!" cried Mrs. Gundry. It was spoken with the scornful estimate of a man's awkwardness that a woman feels at such times.

"I think Man'el will do more for her than both of us put together," said the doctor, as he went out of the door. "I will come round early in the morning."

All night long Man'el sat by Kitty's side. He may have dosed, but the least stir or lightest sound never failed instantly to awaken him. Mrs. Gundry came in half a dozen times during the night, only to find that there was nothing for her to do.

The next day there came a return of consciousness. Kitty's hand was put forth from the bedclothes, and a faint voice asked: "Where am I?"

The room was darkened, and no sound had been permitted to disturb her. Kitty felt her hand resting very gently in Man'el's

as he bent and kissed it, whilst his tears fell on it.

"Kitty, my darling, my darling," he whispered, "you have been hurt, and now you must n't talk, but keep quite still. I am here."

Gently he lifted her head and made the pillows more comfortable, then set her tenderly back again, and he knew that almost at once she had sunk into a deep and healthy sleep.

An hour later came the whisper again as Kitty stirred, "Man'el, are you there?"

"Of course I am, my awn," said he.

"I want to see you, Man'el," whispered Kitty.

He rose and bent down to her for a moment. Then he sank on his knees, holding her hand in his own. "Kitty, let us thank Him," he whispered, with a choke in his voice. And again there was silence.

* * * * * *

It was a day in May when Kitty was sufficiently recovered to sit out of doors. Everything was beautiful with the rich beauty

in which spring seemed to melt into summer, and each brought to each a perfect charm. The warmth of the sunshine was delicious. The blue sky, with trail of white fleecy clouds, arched a picture of hedgerows where the hawthorn bloomed, and green fields, golden with buttercups, where the lambs frolicked and scampered. Clumps of trees stretched away to the haze of distant hills. The air was sweet with the breath of flowers and glad with the songs of birds. The lark was on high, and the cuckoos called to each other; the swallows were skimming the meadows and twittering about the eaves of the outbuildings.

Forth from the old farmhouse door came Man'el bringing a tray on which was set a glass of milk and two or three pieces of bread and butter which his own hand had cut, and beside it was set a bunch of roses from Mrs. Gundry's garden—the roses which had always been Kitty's special care.

Man'el set a cushion behind Kitty's head, and then put the tray on her lap.

"O, Man'el," sighed Kitty, the sigh of a soul filled with satisfaction, "you do know how to make anybody comfortable."

What Man'el might have said was interrupted. He had become quite quick in his replies, and seemed always ready to say the right thing and to say it in the prettiest way, Kitty thought, but at that moment Zacchy came in at the garden gate.

He drew himself up with the pride of a professor who takes to himself the credit of a pupil's success. "Man'el, I told 'ee so, did n't I? Love do smarten up a man like summer do smarten up a garden-bed."

" 'T is wonderful true," said Man'el, his face aglow and his big brown hand holding the thin white hand of Kitty.

"Iss," said Zacchy, "I told 'ee so. Can 'ee mind my words? A proper woman do make a man so beautiful as the south wind and sunshine do make the hedgerow and the thornbush."

" 'T is wonderful true," said Man'el, with his eyes fixed on Kitty.

"But there," said Zacchy, "I was almost forgetting what I come for. Miss Susan Kynance and me is going to be married next Wednesday morning. I wish Kitty was well enough to come to the weddin'."

"Thank 'ee, Zacchy, and I do wish 'ee every happiness."

"Well, I 'm fine and glad to see 'ee so much better, my dear. Good morning," and Zacchy went on his way.

"What a pity you did not understand how to do it," said Kitty, with the old tone in her laugh.

Man'el bent down and kissed the white forehead. "I do call it a mercy," said he.

THE SMUGGLER.

The Smuggler.

A TALE OF EARLY METHODISM.

I.

It was away in the little seaside parish of St. Glewyas, in Southwest Cornwall—a jutting peninsula spread into many coves, separated from each other by high ridges of cliff which fronted the sea like frowning fortresses, then sloped away into a green height patched with sea pink or gay with the golden furze.

At the head of each cove clustered three or four fishermen's cottages, low, with white-washed roof and white-washed walls, clinging to each other as though they dreaded the fierceness of the gales which swept from the sea, and knew the havoc they wrought, and how many a home had been swiftly bereft of father or son, or both.

On a hill amidst the trees stood the gray parish church, its tower a landmark for the

fishermen. Here dwelt the parson and the squire; and here, too, flourished the public-house of the parish, its beaten signboard creaking in the wind, bearing melancholy remnants of "The Three Choughs." And here was the shop where one could get all that mortal ever needed for this life in the simple ways of St. Glewyas.

The rough road that led to the parish went down a winding hill of dreadful steepness, then plunged into a wooded dip, across the little brook, and then climbed up another steep height lost between deep hedges. Half a dozen cottages peeped from the elms, with gardens where hydrangea and fuchsia bloomed the whole year round, and hedged with tamarisk. Thence went a slope seaward where the brook lost itself in shingle and sand; and between the cliffs was a narrow strip of blue sea stretching away to where in silver haze the sea line met the sky and they were lost in each other.

On the grass above the beach the nets were set to dry, and lower down were fishing-boats

and all sorts of fishing-gear. On the sands close to the rippling waves stood great flocks of gulls with head to wind, whilst on the rocks sat the cormorants with the solemnity that befitted their somber hue.

On the other side of the road was the water-mill, and beside it the shed, in the upper floor of which the little Methodist society met for worship on the Sabbath evening. Such was the village of Trenant. Here dwelt Jerry Lanyon, and Jenefer his wife; she a saint in the plain Methodist dress by which our great-grandmothers sought to rebuke the pomps and vanities of a wicked world—not always free, perhaps, from a pride of their humility. But no pride of that sort touched the heart of Jenefer. If ever she thought of herself, it was only to sigh over her own shortcomings, and perhaps with another sigh that she availed so little to make Jerry see things as she saw them.

Not that Jerry was amiss—no, indeed. But while Jenefer sang in solemn tones, "No room for mirth or trifling here," Jerry in-

dulged in a great laugh. And although he went duly to the parish church with Jenefer on the Sunday morning, and as regularly to the Methodist service on the Sunday evening, yet he showed no relish for those other means of grace on week-days which to Jenefer meant so much.

To-day there had come to her a new trouble about her husband, a gloomy fear which oppressed her.

It was at supper-time that Jerry had come in from the day's work in the patch of field attached to his cottage, where he had been busy digging the potatoes and storing them for the winter. Jenefer set on the table a dish of fish and 'tates, the two chopped and fried together and deliciously browned in the oven.

"Ah, Jenefer, my dear, bless 'ee," said Jerry cheerily, " 't is a picture for to look 'pon, and do smell so good as a bit of Paradise."

The quiet wife sat down without a word; but there was a deeper tint in her sweet face, and an added light in her eyes.

Jerry had finished supper, and sat puffing

at his "churchwarden;" and Jenefer had put all away tidily, when she came and sat at his side holding a tract in her hand.

"What have 'ee got there, my dear?"—for printed matter in those days in any form was much of a rarity.

"Praicher called and left it to-day," said Jenefer. "He said Mr. Wesley had wrote it his own self, and special for us Cornish folks."

"Aw! Cornish folks worse than any others, are they, then?" asked Jerry, with the pride for his county which is so marked a feature of its people.

"Well, I s'pose he do think so," sighed Jenefer.

"Have 'ee read it?" he asked, with a touch of temper.

Jerry himself could not read, and marveled at the fine scholarship of his wife, that out of those unmeaning dots and forms she should be able to get at the thoughts of another.

"Iss, I 've a-read it through."

"What is it called, then?"

"*A 'Word to a Smuggler.'*"

Jerry's eyes flashed and his face grew fiery red, for his Celtic blood was easily set on a blaze.

"Law! he to go for to write about smugglin'. What do he know about it, I wonder?" And Jerry took the pipe from his mouth and blew a cloud of smoke contemptuously. "Impidence, iss, impidence, I do call it!" And he puffed away fiercely.

"Mr. Wesley do say 't is a sin," sighed Jenefer meekly.

"He do, do he! Well—lev 'en, then. I do say it is 'n', and he do say it is. And he *do n't* know, and I *do*. Sin, indeed!" And Jerry turned and looked out of the window.

"But he 's a terrible learned man, Jerry, and a wonderful good man, too!"

"Well, s'pose he is, what of that? There 's things he *do* know; but there 's things he *do n't* know. Who is he, then, for to set hisself up in judgment 'pon a whole county? Why, there 's parson up to church town, he 's

college bred an' all. Mr. Wesley is n't more learneder than he, I except. And did n't us land a cargo of brandy for 'en, his own self—he lendin' a hand to stow it away up in the church tower? And he said the bells never rang sweeter than when it was safe, not 'pon his own marriage day. Lev Mr. Wesley 'bide home 'long with his own folks that he do understand—he 's nothing but a foreigner, after all said and done, and we are n't."

Poor Jenefer's face grew troubled. She had been used to it all her days, and had never seen any harm in it; but what if Mr. Wesley were right! "He 's a good man, you know, Jerry!"

"Good. O' course he is. Lev 'en stick to his goodness—lev 'en go on preachin' and prayin' and tellin' folks about heaven and all that! But *smugglin'*—he do n't know nothin' about it. A man might know all about the stars in the sky; but that won't teach 'en how to set a bait for conger-eel, or how to haul in a pilchard-net. 'T is impidence;" and the smoke came out in short, angry puffs.

"He do make out that a smuggler do n't neither love God nor honor the King."

"The king!" cried Jerry, springing up from his chair; "whatever difference do it make to he? The king have never had no more than he do get now from St. Glewyas. And what he never had, he can't lose, and he do n't miss. It do mean more to *we* than it do to he. Why, I can mind when I was nothing but a li'l boy, and the three of us runned a cargo o' brandy—there was 'old Jerry,' as they called 'en—that was grandfer, and there was father—he was 'Jerry,' and there was me—I was 'Li'l Jerry.' 'Let 'en go,' says grandfer, 'let 'en go—he 's so old as you was when you began, and older than I was, I reckon.' Whatever difference do it make to the king? Pooh!"

There Jenefer inclined to agree with Jerry, or at any rate was ready to think it was not of much consequence. But the other objection might have a terrible significance—she sighed deeply.

"But what about God?"

"Well, seemin' to me 't is a terrible mean thing for to bring He into it, to make out that God 's agen it, when He have n't said so. You do know better than I do, Jenefer, for you do read it every day. There 's nothin' in the Bible agen smugglin', is there?"

"No, nothin' that I ever seed."

"Of course there is n't. There 's Ten Commandments, and I do know them by heart, and it do n't say, *Thou shall not smuggle when thou hast a chance.* 'T is n't lyin' and t' is n't stealin' and 't is n't not honoring thy father and thy mother: for they did it their own selves—dear mother, how busy she 'd be long with the ankers o' brandy; and 't is n't rememberin' the Sabbath day for to keep it holy, 'cepts——" And Jerry paused a moment, as one who skates on thin ice, and then boldly went on, as if safety lay in courage—"'cepts when you can't help it so to speak—for winds and tides are not of our makin'—I wish they was."

But Jenefer shook her head. "I do n't know what to say about it, I 'm sure."

"Well, I do," grunted Jerry. "Mr. Wesley do n't know St. Glewyas parish, or he would n't go preachin' up old stuff like that. What did God go for to make a place like this for, all creeks and coves for a ship to come into, and handy gugs (caves) for to stow the stuff in when you 're got it ashore, if 't is a sin? 'T is what I call flyin' in the face of Providence, not to turn it all to account when He have made it like as if it was on purpose." Then Jerry got up and put on his jacket—"I gived Mr. Wesley credit for more sense." And Jerry went on his way.

But Jenefer sat on by the fire. Perhaps her fear for her husband in this life had more to do with her thoughts than even the spiritual anxieties which much more commonly concerned her. To her it seemed a sort of a "token" that Mr. Wesley's tract should have been left by the preacher just at the time when the authorities were taking special steps against smuggling. The thing had become so notorious that those at the head of affairs had begun to suspect that the coast-guardsmen

were in league with the smugglers and had been bribed into quietness.

A Yorkshireman named Murgatroyd, who had proved both his courage and faithfulness in many ways, had been sent down to take charge of things, and with him a company of his own choosing. He had made it known that he was not going to be trifled with, and his men went armed with pistol and cutlass.

"He do mean business, even if 't is a matter of life and death," a fisherman had whispered to his mates.

"So do we," was the reply of Jerry, fiercely spoken.

II.

MURGATROYD was a good-hearted Yorkshireman, whose coming was resented as a foreigner, and to whom the speech of the people was an added difficulty, for the fishermen of St. Glewyas could speak enough of the old Cornish language to disguise their words when they wanted to. He, too, had

came under the influence of Methodism, and was glad to render the little society such help as they were glad to receive. There, at any rate, was a brotherhood into which he was welcomed. Yet amongst them all, though they flocked to hear him preach, and joined with him in singing their rapturous hymns, there was not a man who would not lend a hand at smuggling when opportunity served. And even the women would take their part and run risks which made Murgatroyd's work a greater difficulty. When it came to a conflict with these mothers and maidens, who gave their experience in the class-meeting with such sincerity, it was hard indeed to know how far to go.

But a keener pair of eyes or a quicker pair of ears never any carried than did he. He was there to do his duty without favor or fear. If religion meant anything to this man, it meant that. And they of St. Glewyas, when they set themselves to match their wits against the coast-guardsmen, looked for guidance to Jerry Lanyon.

One evening Jerry sauntered down the village street with an air of innocence that was enough to rouse the suspicion of the Yorkshireman. At the bottom of the street Jerry stood and waited for another, one of the boldest and most determined of the fishermen, Jem Botterill. They met as if by chance, and stood gossiping together, sure that Murgatroyd would be watching them. He knew, as they did, that the *Nancy* was due one night of that week somewhere on the coast, and the thing he sought to find was where it was to be.

The shadows of the evening were creeping over the valley as Murgatroyd watched the two men go on their way, and he resolved to follow them, keeping himself hidden as well as he might. They passed together up the little path that went winding between granite rocks and golden furze-bushes to the top of the cliff, where they sat. Behind them rose a mass of granite hiding them from landward, whilst in front stretched the western sea, the sky still crimson and purple with the lingering tints of sunset.

Murgatroyd saw his chance, and unobserved crept over the short green grass to the back of the rock, and listened.

"When is she a-comin' then, Jerry?" asked Jem Botterill.

"Friday night," said Jerry. "I 've had word—'pon the flood tide."

Jem Botterill looked over his shoulder before he spoke, and lowered his voice, "Where to, then?"

"Under Cat Head—so have all ready. Murgatroyd won't think of lookin' for her where she com'd in last time; and if he do, well, us will be ready for 'en, that 's all."

So Muragtroyd had his information, as Jerry Lanyon knew well enough he would have, and laid his plans accordingly. But the Yorkshireman was quick enough to think it might have been Jerry's trick, and he set his men to watch which way the fishermen should take.

On the appointed evening they saw Jerry and Jem go away over the cliff towards Cat Head, while from other parts of the parish

came men one by one to the same point. Murgatroyd knew now it was all right, and with his company armed for the night's work he waited by Cat Head. Jerry and his men were hidden in a deep cave; and Murgatroyd set his company behind the rocks on the shore.

But what Murgatroyd did not know was that an old mine working at the back of the cave afforded a sloping path to the top of the cliffs, the mouth of which was hidden by bramble and furze-bushes. Silently Jerry led his men up the narrow way to the surface, and then in the darkness they all crept back to Trenant to find the *Nancy* waiting for them. Before dawn a score of hands had borne the ankers of brandy and cases of tobacco safely away. As the day broke Murgatroyd and his men saw the *Nancy* out at sea, dancing on the sparkling waves like a thing laughing at him. The Cornishmen had beaten the Yorkshire-man again.

Murgatroyd knew that it would be of little avail to search for the cargo. By this time

very likely it was borne by a score of donkeys far inland. Silently he moved here and there, observant of the fishermen, but found no clue. He had strolled up the valley of Trenant and caught sight of the miller's shed—that was too open and manifest a place for these sharp men. Still, he might give a look in, as there was no one about. He opened the door—there were sacks of corn, a good dozen of them piled high up, almost touching the floor of the loft above.

There had been a drought, and it was plain that the miller was waiting for more water to grind his corn. Murgatroyd shut the door again, and went up the valley through the wood, to hear nothing but the noisy scolding of the jay and the scream of the blackbird; and to see nothing but the twinkle of the rabbits' tails, as though they, too, resented his coming amongst them as a foreigner.

Murgatroyd strolled back again, and accepted his defeat as only a brave, strong man knows how to do.

By the brook stood Jerry, scarcely able to conceal a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Good-mornin'," said the Yorkshireman, who tried to keep in friendliness with all.

"Good-mornin', good-mornin'," said Jerry. " 'T is a beautiful day."

"Beautiful. How is Jenefer?"

"Beautiful, too, thank 'ee—she always is. Will 'ee please for to come in and see her. She 've got somethin' for to show 'ee, I b'lieve."

"O, and what is that, then?"

Together they went to the cottage, where Jenefer, with loose sun-bonnet set about her comely face, was busy amongst the flowers and herbs. Medicines in those days were home-grown, like the doctors and nurses, and camomile tea was almost a cure-all for such complaints as did not call for the aid of the charmer.

"Jerry tells me you have something to show me," said Muragtroyd, shaking hands warmly with Jenefer.

"You know," cried Jerry, "the thing

that the praicher left—what Mr. Wesley wrote."

"What, a letter from Mr. Wesley?" asked Murgatroyd.

"No—it is n't a letter," said Jenefer; " 't is a tract, I b'lieve, that he 've sent down. But I 'll show it to 'ee—will 'ee please for to walk in?"

Murgatroyd took the tract and looked at it, reading a passage here and there.

"I think I will bring it before the society on Sunday evening."

"Jerry do n't believe in it," said Jenefer.

"I am afraid none of them do," said Murgatroyd. "I wish they did."

"I can't tell what to think," said Jenefer.

"Well, at any rate, it can do no harm to read it, and it may do some good—may I borrow it?"

"O, iss; you may keep it if you 've a mind to."

The next Sunday evening the little loft was crowded; for almost every one went to the Methodist service at night, as the Meth-

odists and all else went to the parish church in the morning.

With hearty singing the service had commenced, followed by a prayer in which Yorkshiremen and Cornishmen could join in lusty responses.

"My friends," began Murgatroyd, "I have in my hand a tract which Mr. Wesley has written and sent down to us. It is called *'A Word to a Smuggler.'*"

Jerry snorted, and all the light and glow of the service died out at once.

Murgatroyd snuffed the tallow candles that were placed on each side of the desk, and put on his glasses.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a horrible crash. Amidst the shrieks of the congregation, the people and preacher, and forms and desks, were all tumbled together in hideous confusion.

The floor had given way.

But almost before any could think what had happened it stayed suddenly—sloping it was true, but firm. The people picked them-

selves up as well as they could, and to their utter amazement found that they were neither killed nor hurt.

It seemed to them all a miracle.

"My friends," said Murgatroyd, in a tone of awe—for the tract was forgotten, had indeed gone down a crack in the floor—"let us praise God for this wonderful deliverance. But for the drought which has prevented the miller from grinding his corn, many of us must have been hurt and some of us have been killed. Let us lift our hearts in singing the doxology."

The congregation had gone its way. Jerry and Jenefer sat that evening by the fire.

"It was a great deliverance," said Jenefer, with her sweet voice; "we ought to be very thankful."

"Very," said Jerry, as he filled his pipe.

"If it had n't been for the miller's corn, we might all have been killed."

"Miller's corn!" laughed Jerry.

" 'T is n't no laughin' matter," sighed Jenefer—"seemin' to me it was a wonderful

Providence;" and she spoke with a tone of reproof.

"Providence! Of course it was. But it was n't the miller's corn that done it."

"What was it then?" Jenefer looked up in surprise.

"Why, the ankers of brandy and cases of tobacco that we brought in 'pon Friday night. They stacks of corn was only in front."

"Well, it was a Providence all the same."

"Iss, but who helped 'en? What do 'ee think of Mr. Wesley's tract now? *'A Word to a Smuggler,'* indeed! Seemin' to me he 've a-got his answer;" and Jerry laughed again. " 'Lev us gone to supper, Jenefer. I ain't got no patience with such old stuff!"

Poor Jenefer sighed. "I do n't know what to think," said she.

THE PRAYERS OF THE CONGREGATION.

The Prayers of the Congregation.

"Mephibosheth Tucker desires the prayers of this congregation."

It was in a scrawled writing, on a dirty piece of paper, and inclosed in a soiled envelope.

"Mephibosheth Tucker desires the prayers of this congregation. 'T is a thing of momentous incomprehensibility."

The last two words were spelt with a hyphen between each syllable, for Mephibosheth had but two books, his Bible and an old English Dictionary. He boasted that he had gone through the dictionary five times, and had got half-way through the letter D for the sixth time, and it was evident that the words had been copied as they were printed there.

"Did you tell him that I am very busy?" I asked, as the maid handed me the note—for it

was Saturday morning, and the Sunday's sermon had yet to be prepared.

"Yes, sir, I told him so. But he came in and sat down and said he was n't in a hurry; he could wait till dinner-time."

As it was only ten o'clock, my first thought was to let him pay the penalty for intruding on my Saturday morning—he should sit there until I had done, and I turned to my work. But it was no good for me to try. Here was I going to preach on love to my brother, and all the time I saw poor old Mephibosheth sitting there mopping his brow with his red handkerchief—for he was quite a genius in the matter of perspiring. After trying to set down a few notes on the text, I pushed back my chair and began thinking of the old man, and wondering what this trouble could be of which the paper told, with its *Mo-ment-ous In-con-pre-hen-si-bility.*

Mephibosheth was a long, lank figure of six feet and more, but you felt that if you could only screw him up into five feet and a half he might have made a proper and com-

pact man. His joints somehow seemed as if they had never joined. His head drooped pendulous and swayed like a flower on its stem. His long arms hung loosely, and his hands flapped like the fins of a fish. His big feet never moved at the same angle, and were flung loosely forward as if uncertain where to come down.

He was the owner of a donkey and cart, and wandered about the country-side picking up rags and bones, generally in exchange for tinware or cloam—which is the west country phrase for crockery. He lived in a little thatched cottage down a leafy lane, that went winding about itself so much that before long it lost itself and disappeared altogether. Behind the cottage was a shed, the home of the donkey and the shelter of his somewhat ill-smelling stock in trade. It was his own bit of freehold, the only bit in the parish that did not belong to the squire. Some ancestor had settled down there, and then, untroubled by anybody as to rent for a good twenty years, found himself in possession of the property.

To the squire it was a fly in his ointment, a gnat in his cup; and there were times when he was tempted to try and thrust forth this objectionable neighbor.

Mephibosheth had never married, and declared that "no woman of the female sex had ever set foot in the place not by my permission and not for to stay." His love was absorbed in his flowers, and they responded with an abundance and profusion that the squire himself might have envied. But it was not as florist that Mephibosheth shone most brightly. In the matter of flowers he was but a star in a firmament of stars, for everybody had a garden in that remote Cornish parish. It was in the matter of bees that Mephibosheth stood alone, a sun in the heavens. Bees were everywhere in his place—they swarmed in the garden, they swarmed under the thatch, they buzzed by hundreds in his bedroom and kitchen. He possessed some strange charm and power—half a witch, the people said—for could he not stanch blood by passing his hand three times and muttering some mysteri-

ous words? Whatever the charm was, the bees knew it and honored it.

Whenever there was a swarm, a boy was dispatched for Mephibosheth with as much excitement and alarm as when they fetched the doctor for a broken limb. And as soon as the long, loose figure appeared, all the household fled and watched from safe places, wondering at his power. He would sweep the cluster into a cloth with one stretch of his arm, and then, laying them out on the kitchen table, humming all the time with a musical monotone, as if he understood their language and sang them one of the songs of their own Zion, he turned them over until he found the queen, and put it under his hat; then, followed by the swarm, he went on his way to set the queen in a hive. He had never been stung, although they lit about him, covering his face and buzzing around him with wild excitement.

And now Mephibosheth had come to ask the prayers of the congregation. What could it be? Requests for thanksgiving were common enough in that healthy parish, where

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babies came in troops, like the angels to Jacob of old at Mahanaim. And even requests for prayer had been known in cases of illness, but of that everybody was sure to know, and would have talked it over for days to everybody else.

That a man should bring his own request for the prayers of the congregation was a thing unheard of, and I found myself repeating the words as I went down to him, *mo-ment-ous in-com-pre-hen-si-bility*. And I remembered how he had said to me once, "I do love them great words, passen. I do lie in my bed and say them over to myself, till I can feel them rollin' like the breakers down 'pon the sands, one over the other, and roarin' like God's thunders."

This man had a soul in him, I had said to myself, and some poetry. But yet, to revel in a dictionary!

I came into the room and stood holding the paper in my hand.

"Well, Mephibosheth," I said; "and what is it?"

He sat on the edge of the chair, his head

propped by his hands, his elbows on his knees. The old tall hat, green with age, was placed between his feet, a red handkerchief lying on the edge of it. He put out one of his hands and flapped it towards a chair.

Much experience had taught me that to bring a visitor quickly to business and to send him quickly on his way when it was done, it is always well to stand. But there was no such escape now—that was plain, so I sat down.

" 'T is n't no manner of a thing to be taken in hand lightly, unadvisedly, wantonly, but duly considerin', as the sarvice do say."

"What! you are not going to be married, Mephibosheth?" I laughed.

But he reproved such levity by a groan, and fetching out his handkerchief, he mopped himself with it round to the back of his neck.

I had to resign myself, and must wait for Mephibosheth to proceed in his own way. Mentally he was as disjointed as he was physically.

"I do pride myself that I be a man of understandin' and observation."

"Certainly, certainly," I said, for that was his usual preface.

"Iss, I be—understandin' and observation."

Again came a tremendous pause.

"But it have failed me this time." He sighed and picked up the red handkerchief.

"There is n't no word in the English language for it but them two. And I have searched thickey dictionary through from end to end—*'Momentous incomprehensibility.'*"

There was nothing for me to do but to wait for a fuller explanation of the mystery. It came after the pause of many minutes.

"'T is the dunkey."

"But you want the prayers of the congregation!" I gasped, horrified at the thought of it.

"Why not, then, sir?" said Mephibosheth, severely, "when it do say that in everything by prayer and supplication we are to make known our wants. And that dunkey is everything to me, so to speak."

"Our own prayers—yes," I said; "but the prayers of the congregation——!"

"And why not that, sir? 'T is a matter of life and death."

"What, to the donkey?"

"The *dunkey!* No, sir, no, but to me. Iss, life and death."

"But I do n't understand."

"Well, I will make it so plain for 'ee as ever I can."

And again Mephibosheth dived for his red handkerchief.

"You see, the squire have told me that he is a-going to put the law upon me for a noosance. He 'd gived me fortnight, he said, and if I can't cure the dunkey of his braying he 's going to put the law 'pon the dunkey. And if I do lose the dunkey I do lose my livin' and all."

Poor Mephibosheth mopped himself again, as if overwhelmed at the terror of it.

"I 've a-tried honest for to cure the dunkey, and I 'm a man of understandin' and observation. I have talked to that dunkey same as I 've talked to the bees, and reasoned with 'en. I 've pointed out the ongratefulness of it, me

a-feedin' and a-tendin' 'en 'most day and night, and never took the stick to 'en in my life—no, not once, not never so much as lifted my hand upon 'en. He was a bit better for it at first, and I do believe he took it to heart; but he 's gone back, so to speak, he 's gone back, and is so bad as ever.

"Well, seein' reasonin' 'long with 'en was n't any avail, and kindness failed—bless 'ee, sir, I ben so patient and tender 'long with 'en as his awn mother—but I had to come to it, compulsory measures what they call; iss, I had for to come to force."

"And how did that answer?" I asked.

"Well, I be a man of understandin' and observation, and I noticed that before that dunkey could bray he had for to open his mouth. 'My dear,' I said, 'you have a-done for yourself now. I 'll stop your brayin' for 'ee by force if I can't by love.' And I made a muzzle and put it on his mouth. He was a bit better the first night; but the next day he made up for it—terrible, terrible. Well, I took the muzzle in an inch; but, bless 'ee,

't was like laughing at anybody, the way he went on. I took that muzzle in till he could n't more than open his teeth for to bite a grass blade. But it was worse than ever. The voice of that dunkey went up a note for every inch I took the muzzle in, till it come to be the terriblest screech, and you could hear it a'most all over the parish."

"I have heard it," I said, "and wondered what it was."

"It was that dunkey, sir, that dunkey"—and Mephibosheth could scarcely conceal a certain degree of pride in its intelligence, even though it had thus defeated him.

He went on, resorting more frequently to the red handkerchief. "'Mephibosheth,' I said to myself, 'you 're beat, dead beat;' and I was, passen, iss, so I gived that up. But being a man of observation, I began to turn my attention to the other end of the dunkey, and hope sort of come springin' up in my heart again. I noticed that when he brayed he lifted his tail. Now, I said, I can do it—if I can only keep his tail down, he can't lift up

his voice. So I went to work and I hung a stone to his tail. When he went for to bray he felt that tuggin' away behind 'en and forgot all about brayin'—only stood tryin' to look round and see whatever it was. But very soon there he was again, brayin', brayin', night and day, seemin' like as if he could n't make enough of it when once he began. So I took off the stone and I put up a brick—a goodish heavy brick it was, too. But that dunkey was worse than ever. That weight seemed to give a kind of high pressure to his bray, and turned it into a roar—you 'd 'a' think it was a lion."

"Yes, yes," said I, for I had often been disturbed by the extraordinary noise of the creature.

Then Mephibosheth took the handkerchief and mopped himself as he sighed, "I have a-come to the end of my observation and understandin'. There is nothing for that dunkey but the prayers of the congregation."

Of course, it was impossible for me to en-

tertain such a request whatever it might mean to the old man.

"Well," I said, as I rose, "I must think about it, and see what can be done." And I resolved that I would see the squire and talk it over with him as soon as I could.

" 'T is serious," said Mephibosheth, rising at last and taking his hat.

"Yes, I know, I know," I replied; "that is why I must think about it."

* * * * * *

The next Saturday morning Mephibosheth arrived again. The maid came in half angrily, for she knew how little I cared to be disturbed at that time. "He would come in, sir, and he says he will wait as long as you like."

I opened the note she handed me, and found another message: *"Mephibosheth Tucker do desire to return thanks. 'T is a thing of infinite inscrutability."*

"Well, well, Mephibosheth," I said, as I hurried into the room, "what does this mean?"

He wiped his face with the red handkerchief, but I saw the excitement was that of some good fortune which had befallen him.

"*Infinite inscrutability*—that 's what 't is, and nothing else. He 's a creature of understandin' and observation."

"What, the squire?" I cried.

"No, sir, no. But the dunkey!"

"Yes," I laughed; "he has had the advantage of your teaching and training."

"Of course, sir; that 's the explanation of it."

"Well, come—tell me all about it."

"It was yesterday. There is n't no such day as Saint Balaam's Day, is there?—'cause that is what brought it about. I was thinking of him."

"Saint Balaam's Day? No!" I laughed, "I do n't think there is."

"Then there ought to be, and it ought to be yesterday. You see, I was comin' round the lane, just a-turnin' into the high road, when who should be there but the squire 'pon his hunter. Well, no sooner did that dunkey

catch sight of the squire than he lifted up his voice and brayed a bray like thunder, so that the squire's horse shied, and nearly throwed him off.

"'Confound that beastly thing!' says the squire; 'I 'll kill that dunkey!' says he, liftin' up his riding' whip, and he all so red as fire.

"Then I stopped and held up my hand, for it come upon me like a thing give to me, all in a minute. 'Your honor,' I said—(and at such times old Mephibosheth could draw himself up into a strange impressiveness, and speak with all the solemnity of a prophet)—'Stop, your honor,' I says, ''t is serious. 'T is a message for 'ee that you 've got for to hear. Once upon a time there was a message sent by a dunkey to a man, and it was a reproof that cost him a broken foot, and he would have done well for to mind it so long as he lived. And seemin' to me this here is a message for your honor. If you can't tell what that dunkey is sayin' I shall have to tell you; for I do knaw—iss, I do knaw. And 't is for your good, too.'"

Then Mephibosheth rose from the chair, and drawing up his great length, he stretched out his arm with forefinger pointed, as if he saw the squire still, and spoke slowly, with long pauses between each word, as he told me what he had said.

"'Am I not a ass?' that 's what he 's sayin'; 'Am I not a ass, and have I not got the feelin's of a ass, the same as thou hast or anybody else, and the speech that my Creator gived me, the same as He gived thee thine, and gived me for to use too? Thou dost curse me for a noosance, dost thee? Take care! take care! Cusses is things that do come home for to roost. I a noosance! Do n't I work for my master, and 'arn his livin' for 'en, and do what he do tell me, and go where he do send me? And all the time thou hast a lot of paycocks up there that is n't no good to nobody, a-screecherin' and' goin' on with uglier old noises than all the dunkeys in the parish! Hast thou not a kennel of dogs howlin' and barkin' and growlin', a-kept for thy pleasure and nobody's profit, that I can

see? Has thou not a passle of cocks that do craw and craw, wakin' up all the cocks of the parish, and they spreadin' the noise all over the country-side, so that folks can't sleep for them after daybreak? And rabbits!—dost thou knaw how they do eat up my master's verbenas and steal the meat out of his garden, and he never paid for all the damage they do do! Shame 'pon thee, squire! shame 'pon thee for cussin' my master's one poor little ewe lamb, so to speak, for a noosance, when thou hast so many!' "

Mephibosheth sat down and became once more disjointed as usual, whilst he felt for his red handkerchief, for he had spoken with an exhausting earnestness.

"Well, sir, it went home to 'en and touched 'en. 'Mephibosheth,' says the squire, 'if thy dunkey do think all that, 't is a pity he can't say it so well as his master. I will never say another word against that dunkey so long as I do live. And I wish 'ee good morning.' 'Good morning, your honor,' I said, 'and I am thankful you 've heeded the message.' "

I rose and grasped the old man's hand. "I am very glad, Mephibosheth, it has ended so pleasantly," I said.

"Iss, passen, but I want for to return thanks, for 't is a thing of *Infinite Inscrutability!*"

THE HAND ON THE LEVER.

The Hand on the Lever.

I had been lecturing at a town in the far north of England, and, having to get south that night, was sitting waiting for the night mail. The door opened, and I, thinking it was some passenger, did not turn my head from the book I was reading; for, the night being cold, I had made myself comfortable in front of the fire. Suddenly I found a hand laid somewhat heavily on my shoulder, and turned to find a most singular-looking man, who held out his hand for a handshake. He wore a cap made of an otter-skin, the head of the creature fixed in front with a pair of glaring eyes and with a grim smile on the half-opened mouth. The man spoke with a dialect that completely baffles spelling.

"My nom is Wobet Wobets. Ah 'm a bwond ploockt from th' bownin'." The "r" was turned into a g, pronounced as a hard guttural that ended with an aspirate.

Slowly I felt my way through the words into a more familiar English, and rendered them thus—"My name is Robert Roberts, a brand plucked from the burning." He stood by the fire, short of stature and bow-legged; the arms were singularly long. His little, humorous face was not only heavily scarred, but the scars were deep blue, as if with grains of gun-powder or dust of coal, giving the effect of a tattoo.

"I was wondehin' if oo'd wog honds wi' me." Then turning to a face that I had just caught sight of outside the window he cried in a loud voice: "I told you so—it 's aw reet."

I must give up the attempt to reproduce the dialect. The man rubbed his hands as if in triumph.

"I knew you would as soon as I saw you—yon chap said you would n't, but I knew better," he went on merrily. "I can tell. There 's folks that can't, but I can. It 's born in me. You can't learn it, and you can't teach it, and if it is n't born in a man he can't get it nohow. I was never deceived in neither of them."

He paused a moment, and a laugh shut his eyes up into a merry twinkle.

"Do you know what the other of them is? —for there 's two. There 's parsons—I can tell them by looking at them, read them like a book—and a good deal better, for I was never much at letters. But the other of them I can tell by listenin', not by looks, looks is no good there. Do you know what 't is?"

"No," I said, glad to have the hour of my waiting relieved by so singular and chatty a visitor. "No, I can't think what it is."

"Pigs."

"Ah," I laughed. "You are a judge of parsons and pigs then."

"Well, I did n't mean to put the two so close as that, you know. May be 't is true of all dumb animals that you know them, so to speak, by their speech. But pigs is my line week-a-days, and parsons Sundays. And I know a pig by his speech and a parson by his looks."

"I am afraid I do not understand their language," I said. "I mean the pigs."

"I dare say not. You see, you never had to study it; but I had, same as you had to learn Latin and Greek. To look at a lot of pigs you would think they was all so much alike as a row of pins or a load of bricks. But, bless your heart, they 're as different as Christians. There 's pigs that will be ripe as gooseberries in three months, and there 's pigs that you can spend twice as much victuals on and only get half so much to show for it."

"And how do you know them?" I asked.

"Well, it is n't everybody that I would put up to it," he smiled. "But it is n't your line so to speak. You see, I carry a carrot or two in my pocket, and holds it out to 'em. One will come rushing up with a laugh like as if the thought of it tickled his insides. You can hear what he says all so plain as if it was spoke to a man: 'That 's a good 'un, that is; I should like a cart-load of that sort;' and he grunts a thank'ee all the time. Another will come along slow and solemn, and poke a long snout and sniff at it with a snort—'Call that a carrot? 'T is n't not hardly worth the trouble of eat-

ing; just better than nothing, that 's all.' Give me the first, says I, I know 'em by their speech same as I know parsons by their looks."

There was a long pause as he sat looking into the fire, and it was with quite another tone that he began again. He had been leaning against the mantelpiece, but now he took a chair and sat down, putting his cap on the table.

"I am a brand plucked from the burning," he said very solemnly. "I am sure you would like to hear about it."

"I should, indeed," I replied.

"You know what it says—*he was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.* That 's *me.*"

Again he sat looking into the fire, and I saw the glistening of a tear in his eye. The sound of an engine rushing through the station broke the silence. He looked up with a smile.

"Tremendous power there—to go right or go wrong—to drag a train or to burst up with mischief and murder. And to think a man can manage it with a hand on the lever."

There came again a humorous twinkle on his face.

"I wish you could see my wife, sir; that 's the hand that managed me, held on to the lever when the engine was on the line and when it was off, held on like grim death; never would give up, God bless her! I have made it up to her as well as I could."

He took up the poker and stirred the fire into a more vigorous blaze. "Yes, it is the wife what done it—and *that—that,*" and he pointed to the fire with the poker. "A brand plucked from the burning."

Then he leaned back in the chair and went on without a break to the end of the story.

"Poacher and drunkard, that is what I was —drunkard and poacher. And between the two I spent half my time in prison. You see, I was a handy man with my fists. Give me a drop of drink and I was all for a fight in a minute. But that wife, there she was waiting for me when I come home, no matter what o'clock it was. And every day she would kneel and pray for me, so hopeful and peaceful as if

she 'd married a saint. Now it was a hot supper, and now it was a good breakfast waiting till I come in, and she slaving the flesh off her bones to get it. There she would be at prison gate when I come out, with never a word of complaining. If she had only nagged a bit, or let out at me somehow, I could have stood it. But to see her dear face growing whiter and thinner, but with never less of a smile for me when I came; to see her dear form shrinking thinner and thinner, and she never saying a word to anybody but God—for she and God they was thick, sir, they was—it made me feel that mad with myself that I just went off for a drink to drown the thoughts of it all. That is the way with the devil of drink—you 've got to drink to forget the curse of it.

"Well, it was a night in February. It was a full moon. A bitter north-easter had been blowing in from the sea all day. I had gone round to the public-house, and had had a glass or two, when a stranger came in, a surly, quarrelsome fellow, that put up my back directly. He began to grumble at this and at

that, said the place was dirty, and the beer was bad, and the company was low, and the town was a mean set, and the whole county was a disgrace to what he called civilization. The missus of the place told him that if he did n't like it he could go somewhere else, and he up and flung his impudence at her. Well, I caught sight of her face, and I knew in a minute what she wanted, and I gave her a wink so much as to say, 'You leave this gentleman to me.' I had had just enough to set my fighting blood afire, so to speak.

"'Beg pardon, sir,' I says, touching my head all so civil and humble as could be, 'you do n't happen to be a dog fancier, do you?' says I.

"'No,' says he, all so snappish as could be. 'I suppose you are—you look like one.'

"'I am, sir,' says I. 'I just am.'

"'Well, what if you are?' says he.

"'Yes, sir,' says I. 'I can tell a dog that can fight when I see one, and I can tell a dog that can't—that can snarl and growl, and then

put his tail between his legs and run away with a howl, before you can get a stroke at him.'

"'What has that got to do with me?' says he, red as a turkey-cock.

"'A good deal,' says I, getting up and coming towards him with my fists square. 'I think there 's one of that snarling sort standing where you are.'

"Well, of course, there was a row, and we went outside and settled it in the moonlight—which was more than he did for the drink. He got so much outside that he did n't want to go in again. When I came back to the landlady there was a hot glass of grog waiting for me, hot and stiff; and when that was done there was another.

"When I came to start for home, well, I must have been pretty far gone. The cold was terrible, and the road was slippery. It was snowing, there was some inches on the ground and I s'pose I must have slipped down and was too stupid to pick myself up again. At any rate, there I was lying in the road knowing

nothing, and the snow coming down thick and steady, and the cold terrible, terrible."

For a moment he turned to the fire, then in a tone of deepest solemnity he whispered: "Her hand was on the lever, sir, bless her, or I should have gone.

"Well, it chanced that night that a party of young men had been giving a kind of nigger entertainment out in the country, and after they had supper were driving home. It was pretty well midnight before they got near to the town, and then one of them happened to catch sight of me lying there half-buried in the snow.

"They stopped the trap and came over to the side of the road where I was. 'He 's dead,' they said, for I was all stiff and stark with the cold, and there was not a sign of life in me. Of course I knew nothing, and might well have been dead for all I knew about it. They lifted me in their arms and laid me along the bottom of the trap, and then drove to the police station. The sergeant was sitting fast asleep before a blazing fire. They woke

him up, and then brought me in and laid me on the floor. 'Yes, he 's dead, poor chap,' said the sergeant. ' 'T is Bob Roberts—we shall never be troubled with him any more. You had better go up for the doctor at once, one of you fellows.'

"While one of them was gone, the rest were all standing round, when the sergeant noticed a little twitch of my mouth, and another saw my arm move.

" 'Why he 's living,' they cried, 'after all.' Then they took off their coats and flung themselves down, and began to strip off my clothes, rubbing me and smacking me, to bring me round. The doctor came in to find a dozen fellows with black faces kneeling there working with might and main, while the sergeant shoveled on the coals and the great fire went leaping and roaring up the chimney.

" 'Yes,' said the doctor. 'I believe we shall save him yet; get some hot water, as hot as you can.'

"A great jar of scalding water was put down at my feet, and cloths dipped in

the scalding water were laid upon my chest.

"Then, sir, I woke!

"I looked about me. I could never tell in any words the fright that came upon me. Here was a great blazing fire—here was this burning jar, and these cloths like flames of fire about me—here were these fellows with their black faces slapping and punching and rubbing me.

"I groaned, for I thought I was in—— well, where I deserved to be. I caught sight of the sergeant. 'You here too,' I cried.

" 'Of course, where else did you expect to see me?"

" 'Well, nowhere, I s'pose, but I did n't know you were——' and before I could get it out there I saw the doctor. Everybody knew what a good man he was,—never a poor body in the place day nor night that the doctor was not ready to help. "O, doctor, doctor,' I groaned, ' 't is terrible, terrible —is 'nt it?'

" 'What is terrible?' says he.

"'Why, that you should be down here amongst these devils.'

"Then he saw what I meant, and laughed. 'No, no, thank God, you are not there,' he said. 'But you were never so near it as you were to-night. And you will never be so near again without going there,' says he. 'It ought to be a warning to you.'

"Then I sat up and began to see things a bit clearer and heard of all that had happened. Within an hour or so I felt pretty right again. They wanted me to have a glass of hot brandy and water before I set out again for home, but the thought of it seemed to burn me like the fire I fancied I had been in. 'I can never touch it again, I shall die first,' I said.

"'That 's right,' said the doctor, for he had not left me. 'That 's right; I 'l go back with you, and see you safe home—it is in my way.'

"When I got to my house, there was a light upstairs, and I crept up as quiet as I could. There was my wife kneeling down at the bed with just a shawl about her, and I heard her praying for me. She looked up with her face

whiter than ever, and her great eyes staring with fright. There were tears on her cheek. She rose up slowly and came towards me, putting out her arms to take hold of me.

"'I thought you were dead!' she whispered. 'I dreamed that you were.'

"'*I was,*' I said, frightened at her white face.

"'I have been praying to God for hours,' she whispered, 'that He would save you to-night from something—I did n't know what.'

"'He has,' I said.

"Then she did what she had never done before—she put her face against my neck, and sobbed and sobbed her very heart out.

"I took her up in my arms—O, sir, she was wasted almost to nothing. I wrapped the shawl about her and held her to myself as tight as I could. Then she seemed to turn all cold, and I thought she was dead. It was me who prayed then, prayed with all my soul. I slipped down upon my knees with her in my arms and her head on my shoulder, and I vowed if God would spare me that dear life,

that my life should be His. 'My life for hers, my God,' I cried, 'my life for hers.' Then slowly she came out of the faint.

"'Are you praying, Bob?' said she.

"'No, my dear,' I said, and my voice choked with great gladness. 'I was, but I am praising Him now.'

"'Let us praise Him together, then,' said she. And we did—we did.

"'My dear,' said I, as we rose. 'Can you remember what it says? *He was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.* That's *me.*'

"'Go on,' said she, with her arm about my neck, as if to make sure that she had got me. 'Go on,' says she, 'to what it says next.'

"'I can't remember it,' I said.

"'*And they began to be merry.*'

"I've made it up to her, sir, from that day to this, bless her. But there's your train. And I must be going; she'll wonder wherever I am."

THE TURF STEALER.

The Turf Stealer.

Uncle Jonathan had got home his load of turf from the moors for the winter, and had safely stowed it away in the wooden shed by the back door, handy for fetching as it was wanted. But the stock was diminishing more rapidly than could be accounted for. He was the last man to suspect anybody was old Uncle Jonathan Brimacombe, but slowly even he was compelled to think that somebody, who had no right to it, was helping himself to the turf.

The matter was discussed as they sat at supper in the kitchen.

"Father, seemin' to me, they peats is goin' terrible quick," said one of the daughters coming in with an armful.

"They be, sure enough," said the other daughter, who was sitting at the table.

"They 'm goin' dishonest, to my thinkin'," said the rosy servant maid.

"I wonder who 't is then," said old Uncle Jonathan.

Far down at the table sat Zekiel Odgers, the carpenter, who lived in the village, but having done a day's work at the place, came in to share the supper. He was an odd-looking man, lean and long-faced. One eye a fixture, seeing only the tip of his sharp, red nose, the other eye making up for it by looking all ways at once. He was busily clearing a huge pasty, for though he did no credit to his victuals, it was wonderful that so thin a man could stow away so large a quantity. It was with a big bit of the pasty still projecting in his cheek, that he put in his say.

"Who is it?" grunted Zekiel, "Well I shan't name no names. But if anybody said it was Nicky Blewitt I should n't go for to contradict them."

"Yes, of course, 't is Nicky Blewitt right enough," said all at the table.

"No, no," said Uncle Jonathan, "do n't 'e condemn the man without any evidence."

"Evidence!" laughed the eldest daughter. "His character is evidence enough."

It was one of the great mercies that the village had such a one as Nicky Blewitt. He was always at hand, affording a ready explanation of whatever went astray. Many a pilferer lived in peace, knowing that the blame would certainly be laid upon Nicky. And very largely it was Nicky's own fault—he actually invited suspicion, a lazy, drinking poacher—the one man in the parish who had seen the inside of a county jail.

That night Uncle Jonathan sat in his chair by the kitchen fire, when all the others had gone to bed. From his seat it was easy to look out on the door of his shed. He had put out the candle, resolving to watch, but almost immediately fell asleep. An hour afterwards he woke, and was surprised to find himself not in his bed; he really could not understand why he had staid. As he rose to go, he chanced to look out of the window, and started. Through the cracks of the door where the peat was stored there was a light. He crept forth

noiselessly and opened it. There, kneeling over a sack half filled with peat, the lantern at his side, was Zekiel Odgers, the carpenter. With a spring he made for the door, but Uncle Jonathan set himself firmly against it. Then Zekiel fell trembling on his knees and gasped. "Aw, maister, forgive me this time, and I 'll never do it no more!"

"No, no, Zekiel, I shan't forgive 'e at all," laughed Uncle Jonathan. "Finish your job like a man. You 've come for a load of peat, and you shall have 'em, so many as you can carry. Here, I will hold the lantern for 'ee. Make haste and fill up your sack—'t is getting late."

But the carpenter could not stir. "No, maister, no. Do 'ee let me go! I 'm that tremblin' all over, that I can't lift one," and the perspiration streamed off him as he spoke.

"Nonsense, Zekiel, fill up the sack and make haste about it."

"I can't, maister. You may kick me or beat me, but I can't lift one of they peats to save my life."

"Well, then, you hold the lantern," said Uncle Jonathan, "and I 'll do it for 'ee."

"No, maister. No, that 's worse still," gasped the miserable Zekiel. "Aw, dear, dear!" Then with trembling hands, and wiping the perspiration from his face with his sleeve, he slowly filled the sack.

"Your sack is terrible small," said Uncle Jonathan—" 't is n't worth while to come so far and stay so late for so little." Snatching up another sack, the old man flung it beside the carpenter.

"Aw, maister, I can't, I 'm nearly dead."

Certainly the carpenter looked it, gasping with agony, trembling from head to foot; his knees tottered under him, and it seemed as if he must have fallen.

"You 're terrible modest," said Uncle Jonathan. "Well, if you won't have no more, I s'pose we had better be going. I 'll light 'ee home with the lantern."

"Aw, no, maister, do n't 'ee, please," gasped Zekiel.

"Nonsense, I must. 'T is pitch dark. Take up your load and come on."

Zekiel gathered all his strength and started, staggering under the weight of the sack. They had gone about half way to the carpenter's house when the load fell from his back, and the turfs lay scattered on the road.

"Maister, I believe I be dyin'," groaned Zekiel, bent and trembling from head to foot. A man was passing, and Uncle Jonathan held up the lantern, and the light fell full on the face of Nicky Blewitt.

"Nicky, come and help for to pick up this here load of peat, will 'ee? Zekiel Odgers is tookt bad."

"Iss, Uncle Jonathan," cried Nicky, "of course I will."

"You might carry them home for him," said Uncle Jonathan; "he 's terrible bad."

They had scarcely crossed the threshold of the door before the carpenter fell down in a dead faint.

"Well, good-night, Nicky, and thank 'ee," said Uncle Jonathan.

Nicky watched Uncle Jonathan out of sight, and then crept back to Zekiel's house.

"He 's terrible drunk," said Nicky, "and ought to be punished for it." And taking the load of turf on his back, he hurried away to his own house. Half an hour later, Zekiel's door was opened and an empty sack was flung on the floor, where it was found the next morning.

"I can't make out what come to they turfs," said the carpenter. "It must have been that Uncle Jonathan took them back again."

"TERRIBLE EXPENSIVE."

"Terrible Expensive."

I.

Petter Polkinghorne's mother was dead, poor dear!

So long as she lived she saw to "the boy Petter," as she called him, all her days; saw to the garden, and saw to the house, and to Petter himself, so that he wanted for nothing.

She had done it all so regularly, and with so little ado, that Petter had come to think that it all came somehow of itself—"so regular as the clock"—and by a similar mechanical process, except that there was no winding up, which the clock never failed to receive the last thing on Saturday night, as old Mrs. Polkinghorne went to bed.

But when his mother died it was as if the clock had stopped. So long as Petter could remember—and that was a good fifty years—the garden was always prosperous, gay with

flowers, and filled with vegetables and fruit, the envy of the neighbors. And all his belongings, linen and other garments, never carried a hole or lacked a button.

But Mrs. Polkingthorne was dead, and Petter knew it. Knew it more as the days went on, until six months had brought things to a desperate plight. The garden was all weeds. Buttons were lacking, both large and small; there were holes visible and invisible, and everything proclaimed, as with a thousand tongues, the loss that had befallen him.

"Poor dear mother!" sighed Petter, struggling vainly to thread a needle; "I believe I shall have to come to it. There 's no help for it that I can see. It 's a terrible job—I must get a missus." And Petter perspired at the difficulties that rose about him, and the still more tremendous difficulty to which all seemed to point.

It was late in the summer that Petter strolled one evening along the village street. The children played with happy laughter about the gate of the garden. Women who

had done their day's work and tidied themselves for the evening's leisure, stood chatting over the garden wall. Men, with an air of abundant satisfaction, stood in the doorways of the white-washed cottages, smoking the pipe of peace. Everybody nodded with a pleasant "Good-evening" as Peter passed.

The sight of it all brought afresh the sense of his own desolation and want. "There 's no help for it," he sighed. "I must come to it."

At the end of the village was a house somewhat larger than the rest. The heavy thatch hung over the little windows and met the clustering roses and clambering jessamine that grew thick about the porch. A large garden stretched on either side of the little path. Here it was that Martha Tregaskis, with sun-bonnet loosely hung from her head, and sleeves turned up over her bare red arms, was busy picking her black currants.

Petter leaned upon the low wall of the garden, and stood for a minute or two watching her. As Martha lifted herself from her work she caught sight of him.

"Good-evenin', Petter," she began, coming towards him, for, although the busiest woman of the parish, things were not so pressing with her that she could not stay for a pleasant chat, and the very calm of the summer's evening seemed almost to invite it.

"You 've got some nice black currants, Martha Ann," began Petter in his slow way.

"Iss, beautiful—never finer, I b'lieve," and the brisk tone was in every way a contrast to Petter's drawl.

Picking up the basket she pushed her way between the bushes and stood by the wall, holding it towards him.

"Will 'ee have some?" she went on in her cheery tones, for a better-hearted woman never walked than Martha Ann Tregaskis, as everybody knew. "Help yourself, Petter, you 're welcome."

"Thank 'ee, you 're very kind," and Petter took a great handful. "Your garden is looking beautiful," said Petter, as he helped himself to the bunches, "beautiful!" And Petter sighed.

Martha Tregaskis stopped and flung a snail over the garden wall.

"Your garden," she began, "is lookin' terrible bad."

"Iss, 't is," said Petter, "going to rack and ruin—poor mother!"

"Have some more black currants, Petter, you 're welcome." Martha Ann held up the basket again.

There came another pause, and Martha caught sight of the ragged sleeve of his coat as Petter lifted his hand to his mouth.

"You do look as if you wanted somebody to see to 'ee, too, seemin' to me."

"Iss, iss, 't is so," sighed Petter. "Poor mother; I b'lieve I shall have to come to it!"

Martha Ann drew up the sun-bonnet that had slipped back over her head.

"Why do n't 'ee get somebody to see to 'ee, then, Petter," and the tone was one of tenderest pity.

"I b'lieve I must," sighed Petter again.

"Well, have some more black currants, Petter, you 're welcome! You may have some

to take home with 'ee, if you mind to, only be sure and bring back the basket."

"You 're very good, I 'm sure," said Petter, whilst Martha busied herself to fill the basket. Then she came back and handed it over the wall.

"You may have some more when they 're gone, if you mind to, if you 'll only bring the basket back."

"Thank 'ee, Martha Ann," said Petter, as if his thoughts were elsewhere.

He set the currants down at his feet, and leaned on the low garden wall. Meanwhile Martha Ann, loath to waste more time, was filling her blue cotton apron with apples.

Five minutes had passed without a word; then Petter sighed.

"Iss, iss I *must* come to it. Poor mother!"

"Will 'ee have some?" said Martha Ann presently, holding out her apron filled with rosy quarrendens. "You 're welcome, Petter."

"Martha Ann," said Petter solemnly, "how do you think it would sound—'I publish the banns of marriage between Petter Polk-

inghorne, bachelor, and Martha Ann Tregaskis, spinster?' "

"Aw," said Martha, with a start and a flush upon her rosy cheek. "Terrible sudden, is n't it?"

"Well, iss," sighed Petter; "but I must come to it, I must come to it!"

"Well, lev' us think about it a bit!"

"No, there is n't no time," said Petter, taking up the basket. "I 'll go 'long and see parson about it. Good-evening, Martha Ann."

"But here, Petter——" But Petter had turned and started on his way.

"Well, have another apple, won't 'ee?" cried Martha Ann.

"Well, I do n't mind if I do," sighed Petter, and he turned again, sighing still. "Iss, iss, I must come to it."

"Bring back the basket," Martha Ann called after him, as he went up the leafy lane to the vicarage.

"Good-evenin', parson," Petter began, as he sat down in the clergyman's hall, the basket of black currants resting on his knees.

"Good-evening; good-evening, Petter," said the vicar.

"I come to see you about gettin' married," Petter began.

"That 's right, that 's right," said the clergyman, rubbing his hands. "I 'm delighted to hear it."

"I 've got for to come to it," Petter sighed. "Poor mother!"

"Well, I am very glad," the parson went on. "I have noticed how much you need somebody to see to you. And who is the lady?"

"Well, I have n't quite made up my mind," drawled Petter. "Not quite. But I was thinkin' 'bout Martha Ann Tregaskis. She 's a thrifty woman and got some nice black currants and all."

"Admirable, admirable," said the parson, drawing himself up, and rubbing his hands. "You could n't do better! A thrifty woman, as you say. Not a better-hearted woman in the parish." Then the parson laid his hand on Petter's shoulder. "And I 've no doubt,

Petter, with a little something put by for a rainy day, you know."

"Iss, iss," sighed Petter. "I 've got for to come to it."

"Well, now," said the vicar, "I shall require the names of the parties interested."

"Iss, sir. Well, sir, there 's my name—Petter Polkinghorne."

"And the lady's name is Martha?"

"Well, I have n't quite made up my mind—but s'pose you do say Martha Ann Tregaskis, *for the present.*"

"Petter Polkinghorne and Martha Ann Tregaskis," wrote the parson, repeating the names.

"For the present," put in Petter.

"O, no, no," said the vicar, as if that were not to be entertained. "Well, now, the banns will be called three times, you know, and then you can get married; the sooner the better."

"Well, good-evenin', then, sir," said Petter, rising, and putting his arm through the handle of the basket as he moved towards the door.

"O! but stop, stop," said the vicar, "my good man, you have forgotten; there is a half-crown to pay!"

Petter put the basket down and lifted his hand to his ear as if in doubt. "What, sir?"

"There 's half a crown to pay," the vicar repeated in a louder tone.

The hand fell as Petter groaned, "Half a crown! half a crown! Dear, dear, 't is terrible expensive. You could n't say nothin' less, could 'ee, sir, for the first time?"

"O, dear no," said the vicar, with a tone of slight annoyance. "It 's half a crown."

Petter thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out some money, mostly coppers. "Well," and Petter sighed, "there 's *my* fifteen pence, and to-morrer I 'll send up Martha Ann with *her* fifteen pence."

"No, no," said the vicar. "That won't do at all—it 's half a crown!"

"Well, that would be half a crown, would n't it, sir?" drawled Petter. "One an' threepence from me, an' one an' threepence from she. But there 't will come to the same

thing." And Petter added the rest of the money. "Martha Ann can pay me her one and threepence to-morrer when I take back the basket."

A week had passed, and the banns had been called once, when Petter went up to the vicarage again.

"Come up to see you about they banns, parson," he began.

"Yes," said the vicar. "I hope there 's nothing wrong."

"No, nothing wrong, only I wanted to know if you could change *one* of they names, an' not the whole o' that—only a little bit!"

"Whatever do you mean?" said the vicar, half indignant.

"Well, what I was thinkin' is this 'ere. Would you be kind enough to scratch out 'Martha Ann,' an' put in 'Liza?' Her sister have a comed home, and she 's rather younger an' better lookin', seemin' to me, than Martha Ann."

"Well, well," said the clergyman, "it 's

monstrous, monstrous! And besides there 'll be a half a crown to pay, you know."

"A half a crown," gasped Petter, frightened. "Put up the price, have 'ee? Why last week it was only half a crown for two names, and this is only one name an' not the whole of that."

"But the whole thing has to be done *de novo.*"

"Aw!" gasped Petter again. "I s'pose that 's terrible expensive. A half a crown," said Petter to himself, jingling the coins in his trousers pockets, "an' I could n't ask Liza to pay me her one an' threepence, because Martha Ann paid me her one an' threepence when I took the basket back."

Slowly Petter rose and turned. "Well, then, sir, lev it 'bide, lev it 'bide. *'T is n't worth it.*"

The vicar watched him out of the door, and then sat for an hour boiling with indignation, and occasionally boiling over.

"The mean wretch!" he repeated. "To think that Martha Ann Tregaskis should

throw herself away on such a miserable fellow! Well, well, the thing 's altogether past my comprehension."

When the wedding did take place Petter Polkinghorne certainly looked the most wretched bridegroom that ever went forth to win a bride. He had gone so far as to get a new coat, but that availed only to make the nether garments look the more disreputable. Without a collar, he wore a rusty black tie that failed to hide the frayed shirt-front beneath it, whilst his boots bore a thick crust of mud.

"Petter Polkinghorne, wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?" asked the parson sharply; for he could ill conceal his regret that such a woman should waste herself on such a man.

The bridegroom did not reply aloud, but under his breath said to himself—"Iss, I must come to it, I s'pose. Poor mother!"

Martha Ann nudged him. "You must say 'I will.' "

"I will," groaned Petter, in a lamentable voice, like Darius of old.

In the village it was much more than a nine days' wonder. The groups of neighbors stood gossiping together on the topic of the wedding and the verdict was unanimous. "Whatever was Martha Ann thinking about? She for to go and take up 'long with a man like that!"

It was in the little shoemaker's shop that three or four women met whilst the topic was still fresh in the parish.

David Glasson sat tapping away at his work; the big spectacles, fastened by a black band round his ears, hung at the tip of his nose. His mouth kept time with the hammer, his under lip, which somewhat projected, thrusting itself forward at each pull of the wax end. He was a widower, for whom an elder sister kept house.

"Well, who would ever have thought it of her?" began the neighbor from next door.

"I can't make it out, for the life of me," said another. *"He!"* And the word was spoken with infinite contempt.

"Iss, and a dozen well-to-do men that

would have been proud to have her if she 'd so much as gived them a look, and she never would! To think of it! Never took the leastest bit of notice, not of one of them, well-to-do as they was, and wanted to make her so comfortable as she could live. He 've got his mother's old miserly ways—never would leave 'en have a ha'penny to spend if she could help it. No wonder she left a tidy lump in to the bank."

"It is a thing past explainin'," said another; and they all agreed.

"What do you make of it, David?" asked the sister, turning to the shoemaker.

David Glasson hammered on as if he had not heard, until he had finished that job; then he set down the hammer and looked over the heavy brass rim of his spectacles.

"What do a man know about the ways of a woman? It was one of the mysteries that Solomon gived up. And he had a goodish bit of experience 'long with 'em too." Then he took a waxed thread and began to bore with the awl.

"They say that Farmer Ash in to Goonvean made her an offer when she was younger. Iss, and she would n't have nothin' to do with him, same as all the rest."

The shoemaker stopped and looked up again. "Well, I will tell 'ee, if you mind to, what I do think."

"What then?" asked the neigbors, knowing how much easier it was for David to see things than to tell of what he saw.

David pushed the things a little out of the way as if he needed room.

"Well, there 's women that 's born mothers, and there 's women that 's made mothers. There 's women that do come into the world with it in them; and there 's women that can't find it until they 're grown up. And that 's Martha Ann Tregaskis—a mother born."

David's eyes were turned from the neighbors and were looking through the little window to the sky, away beyond where the fields with their hedgerows went sloping to the stream, and then went sloping upwards to the distant woods.

"I can mind her all her life, bless her, and I can see her all so plain as if 't was only yesterday—a little maid of eight or nine, with so pretty a face as ever God Hisself could make."

David staid a moment, for his mind had wandered back for forty years to a memory undimmed for him. His wife had died when the first baby was born, and three years later the little one itself was taken.

"Martha Ann was born a mother. To me she was more like one of God's own angels than anythin' else. Before she went to school of a mornin' she would be round to see the baby, and so soon as school was done, she was here again. And that little one knowed her an' would lie in her arms and look into her face and laugh—never so happy as when she was there. And the last to see her every night was Martha Ann. The neighbors was all very kind, but I never needed nobody to see to the child when that li'l angel was about. And when the child was took away I know that to Martha Ann it was like as if it was her own—

her own—that was gone. For years she would go to that grave and put the little bunch of flowers upon it. A real mother that maid is, and always was."

For a moment David took up his work as if to begin it again, but he held it idly in his hand.

"See how she have always tended to the sick night and day—nothing good enough for them—and nursed them to the last. Why, old Mrs. Polkinghorne's last breath was a blessin' her."

"Well, iss, that 's true, o' course," said a neighbor woman, "but for all that I can't see whatever Martha Ann should go to marry a man like that for—she could n't love 'en."

"Love 'en," said David slowly, "no, perhaps not, perhaps not; but she was sorry for 'en. If it was n't love it was pity, and that is next door to love sometimes. Yes, sorry for 'en," added David after a pause, and he turned to take up his work again.

II.

A YEAR had passed and another summer come. Petter's garden under Martha's skillful hands had grown into more than its former fruitfulness, and everything was rich in beauty. The rosy apples hung thick upon the trees, and the currant bushes were heavy with their fruit.

But most wonderful was the change in Petter Polkinghorne himself. "Boy Petter" had grown into the man. In former years the mother had done all the thinking and the management of everything, and her son had been but a pair of hands to do what she bade and a pair of feet to carry out her errands. All within him had been stunted and unformed. But now there had come the force which had developed him. What the summer sunshine had done for the garden Martha's genial presence had done for Petter. You saw it in his walk, the figure erect, he stepped with a firmer foot; you saw it in the smile that lit his face; you heard it in the new confidence

with which he spoke. There had come into his soul a tender thoughtfulness. It was as when the showers of April and the sunshine of May bring to the thorn the glory of its bloom. And in all and over all was a love, almost a worship, for his wife's sweet ways, an adoring wonder that such a woman should ever have come to be his wife.

The day's work was done, and Petter sat on a chair, when Martha called from within, "Put on your coat, will 'ee, Petter, and come down with me to Mary Tyack's. I got a bit o' somethin' nice for her, poor dear; she won't last long, I 'm afraid."

"Bless 'ee, Martha Ann," said Petter, springing up at once, "whatever would folks do wi'out 'ee?"

"Well, better than *you* could perhaps," laughed the wife, coming out with the basket on her arm.

"Me!" cried Petter; "bless 'ee, I wish I could tell 'ee all that I do think about 'ee, but I can't," and Petter tried to tell her what he wanted in more than words.

"For shame," said Martha Ann, arranging her bonnet. "And folks might see 'ee an' all."

"I do n't care if they do," laughed Petter, with all the recklessness of a boy. "And I can't help it; neither."

"You 're old enough to know better," whispered Martha Ann, as her rosy cheeks flushed, and the merry twinkle shone in her eyes.

"I was a year ago," and Petter laughed again, "but I are n't since you come—why I 'm years younger."

So they went on their way to Mary Tyack's. The eldest girl was old enough to take her mother's place, and Martha Ann had gone up-stairs to comfort the sick woman. Petter had taken upon his knees the two little children—they were twins of some three or four years, whose father had died soon after they were born.

"There 's somethin' in my pocket for 'ee if you can find it," he said.

The light hands were busy diving here and there, struggling to the depths of Petter's

pockets. At last they had come upon the treasure, and each held a big apple that he had plucked for them as he came out of his garden.

A little later Mary Tyack had passed away. In was on the day of her death that, after Martha Ann had seen to everything that was needful, she sat with her husband by the kitchen fire, for the autumn evening was chilly.

"Petter," she began, "do 'ee love me?"

"My dear life, I wish I could tell 'ee how much."

"I 'm fine an' glad," said Martha, "for I wanted to ask 'ee somethin'."

It was plain that Martha was deep in thoughts that were serious, almost solemn.

"What is it, then, my dear?" asked Petter, as he laid his hand tenderly on her shoulder.

"God has been very good to us," said Martha Ann, looking into the depths of the fire.

Petter's eyes brimmed with tears. "I can never thank Him enough.

"I been thinking about Mary's children. My heart is achin' for 'em," said Martha Ann.

There was a long pause, which was broken by Petter. "Would 'ee like to have 'em home here 'long with us, my dear?"

"Would you mind, Petter?"

"Mind," said Petter with a start. "Mind! Bless 'ee, my dear, you 've been so good to me that I feel like as if I wanted to do somethin' good to everybody—I should love it."

"You 're very good, Petter, I 'm sure," said Martha Ann, "very."

" 'T is your fault, Martha Ann," said Petter, "I do n't believe there ever was another like 'ee—there!"

It was a few weeks later that the parson called one evening and found Petter in the garden with a child on each shoulder, shouting to him, amidst their bursts of laughter, to gallop faster. Red and breathless he came upon the vicar.

"Well, Petter, I think it 's splendid of you and Martha Ann to take these little ones."

"Me," cried Petter, " 't was n't my doing, 't was all Martha Ann."

"Ah!" said the vicar. "She is a treasure."

"Treasure," laughed Petter; "can 'ee mind what I said about gettin' married, sir, that it was terrible expensive? Well, she 's a tidy heavy woman, *but she 's worth her weight in gold.*"

OLD APOLLOS.

Old Apollos.

I was driving with a friend in New Brunswick along a delightful valley of some strange Indian name. On one side stretched miles of forest land, broken here and there by a cleared patch, in the midst of which stood the wooden farmhouse and group of out-buildings, and where the fruit-trees and flowers grew with a rich luxuriance.

Nature, as if in pity for the long and bitter weather, comes with such a glorious summer in this country, and such sunshine, that I think of Canada rather as the "Lady of the Blue Skies" than as the "Lady of the Snows."

In the woods were moose, and bear, and wild-cat, of which those whom I met had many stories to tell, especially the men of the lumber camp, who lived for some months in the remotest part of the forest.

One told me how that one evening at sunset

he had lingered behind the rest to finish some work, when suddenly he heard, not far away, the howl of the wolves. He stood some six feet two inches in his stockings, as brave as he was big, but on this occasion at any rate he was frightened. "I seized my ax," said he, "and slipped away in my soft moccasins at a pace I had never gone before, and made for the camp. I saw no more of the wolves, but I got a bit of a scare."

Another told me how that sleeping one night in the camp, the fire burning at the entrance to keep off the mosquitoes, his bull-dog that lay at his side sprang up with a growl. He awoke at once, and in the entrance saw by the fire-light a bear showing his teeth and grunting at the dog, whilst the dog showed his teeth with a fierce snarl. "For five minutes they stood making ugly faces at each other, then the bear turned and went off, with growls like distant thunder as he made his way through the forest."

That faithful dog met with an untimely end in his master's defense. The man had

wounded a moose, and the infuriated beast came rushing upon him, with huge horns and all his great bulk. Then it was that the bull-dog sprang and seized the moose by the nose. Maddened by the pain, the moose galloped furiously through the forest, banging the dog against the trees as he flung his head violently from side to side. The man followed as fast as he could, and at last came upon the moose utterly spent, with the bull-dog still hanging at his nose—*dead,* but the teeth still kept their hold.

Beguiled by such stories, we drove along the shady path. But the sight that was strangest to me was not in the heights where the forest stretched. It was in the river at the other side—for river it was called—but whatever water entitled it to the name was quite invisible. The creek was filled, crammed, jammed with huge logs. Great piles of them rose up on each other in huge masses, and the banks of the stream were piled with them some six or eight feet above the river bed. I found that in the floods of the spring, when melted

snows sent the river surging on its way, these logs were floated down by the million, and secured at the mouth of the river by booms and dams.

Suddenly my mind was diverted from the logs as my friend pulled up at a little gate and lifted his hat.

"Good-morning, Salome," said he.

An old colored woman who was at work in the garden raised herself and took off her hat in response. "Good-mornin', good-mornin'," said she, and the white teeth shone in the swarthy face.

"Where is Apollos to-day?" he asked.

"O, he 's 'bout somewheres. 'Pollos ain't never out of the way very far, sah."

Then with a shrill voice that could be heard for a quarter of a mile off she called him. " 'Pollos, yere 's de massa preacher."

While we were waiting for 'Pollos I was introduced as a minister from London.

"Yes," said Salome, "I'se Methodist. A thousand mercies de good Lord gib 'Pollos and me, but I bless Him most of all dat He

ever brought me for to b'long to the blessed Medodist A—bom—in—ation."

The word was rolled out with infinite unction, each syllable lingered over as if it were divine.

Then round from a shed came old 'Pollos, as finely built a man as I ever saw; considerably over six feet in height, with huge shoulders and massive frame, he was evidently a man of enormous strength. His eyes sparkled with good humor, and his great mouth was fixed in the biggest smile that could ever grow on any face.

A hearty handshake and happy "How d 'ye do?" and we were off again.

"That is Apollos," said my friend as we drove on. "I am glad you have seen him."

"A splendid specimen of a man," I replied.

"Yes, and he is a grander man than he looks. Some time I will tell you a story about him as good as anything you ever heard."

It was that evening as we sat in the veranda, trying to keep away the irritating mos-

quitoes by the smoke of a cigar, that I reminded my friend of his promise.

Well (he began), the man's great strength, enabling him to do the work of two men, and his readiness to oblige anybody, anywhere, had made him a favorite with the boss of the lumber gang, and he reckoned every year upon securing the services of Apollos. One year a new-comer, on going to work, found himself beside the colored man. A surly fellow, he turned round and told Apollos to go and work somewhere else. He was not going to have a miserable nigger alongside of him. He never had and he never would, and he cursed him with a string of oaths such as only some parts of the American continent seem capable of producing.

Apollos looked up gently with a grin, and seemed to be thinking how easily he could make mincemeat of this stranger. Then, drawing himself up to his full height, and stretching his shoulders, he leaned on one hand on the long tool with which the lumber men fix and guide the logs.

"Guess you 'd better tell the boss; he sent me here," said Apollos, and turned quietly to his work.

Away went the surly new-comer full of complaint and indignation. "Say, boss, I ain't a-going to stand this, working along with a dirty nigger. I never done it yet, and I guess I never will. If he do n't quit, I shall—that 's all."

"Well, you may," said the boss, angrily. "Old 'Pollos is worth two of such fellows as you, and if he ain't ashamed to work with you it 's just like him—that 's all. The last man who goes out of this gang is 'Pollos."

Muttering a curse on both boss and negro, the man went back to his work. But all that day he lost no opportunity of flinging the bitterest taunts and insults at the "colored devil," as he called him. Apollos took no notice of it all, but worked away at the logs, the great smile perpetually lighting up his face.

That evening they gathered after the day's work about the camp fire. Most of the men

were sitting around smoking their pipes. Apollos lay full length on the ground chewing a blade of grass, crunching it in his mighty jaws, when his enemy came along his way.

"You cussed nigger!" he cried. "It 's bad enough to work along with a dirty thing like you all day, but I 'll be hanged if I 'll have you in my way when the work is done. Get out of this." Lifting his foot with the heavy boot of the lumberman, he gave him a terrible kick. For a moment an angry look flashed from the negro's eyes, like a spark that flies from the steel at the stroke of the flint; then the smile came back again, and he got up and moved away, lying down by the side of the boss.

'Pollos was a favorite with the men; they had all proved his goodness many a time.

"Look here," said the boss, springing up, " 'Pollos, why do n't you wring that fellow's neck? You could lick the miserable dog out of shape in one minute; and leave him so as his wife would n't know him, and his mother would be ashamed to own him."

"I would, if I were you," cried a half dozen of the men, to whom nothing would have been more acceptable than the excitement of a fight.

"Why do n't you do it, 'Pollos?" cried one of the men who sat upon a tree stump somewhat apart from the rest.

For a minute there was silence. Then Apollos took the straw from his mouth, and, turning around, said, "I'se gwine to tell you why 'Pollos could n't hurt dat man."

Slowly he rose, and his great frame towered above them all. He lifted the old battered straw hat and closed his eyes, then he folded his hands together, and spoke in a tone of reverence that was awe.

"It come to pass in de cool of de day, dat 'Pollos he be in de woods all by his own self. And de Lord God Almighty He come walking along in de cool of de day, and Him say, ''Pollos! 'Pollos!' Den me say, 'Here am I, Lord.' And de Lord Him say, 'Where's dat man, thy brudder?'"

"Brother!" said the fellow. "Brother, in-

deed." But the negro did not hear it. He was absorbed in the consciousness of a Divine Presence.

"Den me hold me peace. And the Lord Him say, and His voice tremble like as if He very sorry, ''Pollos, de Lord God Him give you de strength of two men dat you might help your brudder, and you go kill your brudder?' And den de angel write down in de book, 'It repented the Lord God dat He made 'Pollos.'"

For a moment the negro remained standing in silence. Then he opened his eyes and the smile came back, and he lay down again, plucking another blade of grass and beginning to chew the juicy end of it. A stillness rested upon the men, who smoked on with a strange feeling upon them as if the Lord God had been in their midst.

It was but a day or two afterwards that the men were at work at a "jam" of timber—a piled up mass of logs—when suddenly the block broke. It was a moment of great peril to all. Before the men could get away the

mass began to heave and slide. Every man knew the danger of the moment, and hurriedly scrambling over the logs, stepping carefully on one and another as it twisted and turned in the torrent, they reached the shore—all save the new-comer. He, unused to the thing, stepped awkwardly on a bit of timber that rolled over with him, and in a moment he was in the torrent and swept away under the logs.

"He is gone!" cried the men. "He will never get out of that."

Instantly Apollos flung off the big boots, plunged into the stream, and dived under the logs.

"The fool," cried the boss, "to fling away his life for a fellow like that!"

"Two of 'em gone now," muttered another old lumberman; "one was bad enough."

Then it was as they watched from the river bank they saw the negro's hand thrust up between the logs, struggling to make an opening. Presently he managed to push up his head, and then with his great shoulders and almost superhuman strength heaved back the

pressure of the lumber, and they saw that in his other arm he held the white man, the head resting against the neck of the negro, the face white as death. Then joining hands the watchers managed to grasp the pair, and they were dragged together to the bank.

"The fellow 's dead," whispered the men to each other.

"No," cried Apollos, "de Lord is gwine to give dat brudder to me. I'se got de 'victions of dat."

The man was saved, but it was only after the most desperate effort on the part of the negro.

When consciousness returned it was to find Apollos bending over him as if rubbing his own life into the helpless man.

As the breathing began again audibly, and the man languidly opened his eyes, the negro arose and took off his hat, whilst with folded hands and upturned face his lips moved in prayer. Silent for a moment, then the great emotion of gladness swept over him and burst

into a mighty shout. *"Hallelujah! And de Lord God Him say to all de holy angels, 'I'se glad I made brudder 'Pollos so strong.'"*

That night the darkness came down upon the camp, and all were asleep except one. It was the new-comer, who crept over to where Apollos lay. The negro was awakened by an arm about his neck and the tears of a face that bent over him.

"'Pollos," he whispered, choked with emotion.

"Brudder, brudder, is dat you?"

"Brother! no brother of yours. I wish I was. 'Pollos, I want to do something for you—something just tremendous if I could; but what can a fellow like me do for the likes of you?"

"Brudder," whispered Apollos, "dere 's two things dat would please dis nigger mo' dan enough."

"You can't ask for nothing I won't give you, 'Pollos, if it is my life."

"Dem two things dat I wants are easier,

brudder. First, quit cussing, and den bless de good Lord dat give you to me."

"But I want to do something for you," urged the man.

"Dat 's for me—de best in de world."

Never was an oath heard again on that man's lips. Night and morning the new hand went gladly away with Apollos for half an hour into the woods, and all knew that they went to pray. Henceforth it was always "Brother Apollos."

It was later that, as they sat together, the new hand was talking to Apollos of the future. "Brother"—and the tone was full of the tenderness and love with which he always spoke to the negro—"Brother, I never got a chance of knowing much about Church and religion, but I should like to belong to yours, for I guess I just belong to you myself."

"Bless de Lord!" said the old negro as he took the white man's hand in his own great grasp. "Den you 'll just have to come 'long with Salome and me, and b'long to the Methodist A—bom—in—ation."

LOVE'S LITTLE HUMORS.

Love's Little Humors.

As the church clock chimed eight, whilst the blue smoke of the houses rose straight up in the morning air, Michael Chigwidden came out at the side door of his little tailor's shop, his feet shuffling along in a big pair of red carpet slippers—he never put on his boots till the day's work was done. He took down the shutters, and then went in at the door, his hand giving an extra twist to the two flat curls into which his hair was brushed over each ear—they lent a kind of flourish, a graceful finish to his bald head.

From dawn to dark Michael Chigwidden was regulated by the church clock; by its quarters he woke, he dressed, he ate and drank, he worked, he went to bed, he slept. Once, when the clock was out of order and stopped for a fortnight, Michael Chigwidden was ill—very ill—the only illness of his life.

People said the stopping of the clock was the cause, not a coincidence.

There are some men who surely never were born; the thought of it is absurd; no effort of the imagination could ever picture them as babies; they must have been made right off—like Adam, finished at once. Such a man was Michael Chigwidden—rigid, exact, crystallized. For such men the years of their growth abide like the branch of the tree. You might cut Michael Chigwidden down, or chop him up—you might saw him or plane him—but you could never bend him to any other shape than that in which he had grown.

Now of all men the tailor would appear the last who could afford such cast-iron ways. There are many callings—from the orthodox minister to the rag-and-bone merchant—where the reputation can be maintained by an angry resentment of new-fangled notions. The tailor, however, must hold the mirror to the changeful ways of human vanity, and veer with the winds of fashion as they blow from London or Paris. But Michael Chigwidden

was as the rock to the river. Fashions might come and fashions might go, but he was not borne along by this forthy stream. Rooted and firm as the solid earth, he changed not with the spring or autumn; he was as the yew of which Tennyson sings:

> "O, not for thee the glow, the bloom,
> Who changeth not in any gale;
> Nor branding summer suns avail
> To touch thy thousand years of gloom."

Such was Michael Chigwidden.

II.

THE town of West Tamerton, although of very considerable importance to those who lived there, or within the circling influence of its market day, was at least remote and leisurely. No railway in those days disturbed the wooded valley of the Tamar. Once a day the coach went up and down its steep thoroughfare linking it with mysterious regions "up the country." This was the main artery

of its existence; there were lesser veins of circulation in the shape of sundry vans that crept to the neighboring towns and villages within the radius of ten or twelve miles, apparently of much use only on market days. So far as news was concerned, West Tamerton lived, as the doctors say, on its own adipose tissue, found its supply within its own little self. It knew everything about everybody else in the place, and mostly knew a great deal more about other people than they knew about themselves. There hung over it a dreamy leisureliness as of a land where it was always afternoon—except, indeed, on market days, when everybody put on a show of bustle which so exhausted the energies that it took a week to recover. Other days went around like a straggling flock of sheep, so similar that you could not tell one from another; then came the market day at their heels, like a barking sheep-dog, and they scampered hither and thither in a rush.

Indeed, it was told that old Diggory Gray, away in St. Dunstan's parish did actually

mistake the days, so much alike were they, and, somehow losing account of the week, got up on the Sunday and thought it was Saturday. He rose at five, instead of seven, which marked with him the day of rest, and spent the morning in scattering manure over the field. Then at eleven he went in for a hasty dinner, dressing himself for market between the mouthfuls, putting on the clean "bosom" and the black tie and the Sunday coat and waistcoat. With the big basket of butter and eggs on his arm he set out for the walk over the moors. But as he drew near to the highway he woke up sufficiently to scratch his head by way of gathering his wits together. There was a strange and startling stillness everywhere. No rattling carts went on the road, no hoofs of trotting horses.

"Whatever is it then?" said Diggory to himself.

He entered the street of the town. No cattle stood in its ways, no "stannin's" choked the footpath. The market-house was closed, the shops were shut. Not a soul appeared in

the streets. The very public-houses had not opened their doors.

"Whatever is it, then?" said Diggory again with a gasp.

Then a slight break of light crept over him.

"Must be a burrin', I b'lieve, and everybody gone to it. Dear, dear! and I never heard tell of it, neither: must be somebody very important, too."

Then came a stout old woman to the door of her house, thinking that everybody else had gone to church and it was safe for her to show herself. Diggory hastened to find some explanation of the mystery.

"Here, mother, who is it then?"

"What 'ee mean?"

"Why, whose burrin' is it?"

"Burrin'; what are 'ee talking about?"

"Why, it must be a burrin'—all the shops shut up, and nobody about, and market day and all."

"Market day! Aw, dear, dear! Where do you expect to go to, I should like to know, with

a great basket on your arm, and this here the blessed Sunday?"

Diggory gasped. "Sunday!"

"Iss, Sunday."

Diggory turned in horror, and in a great perspiration. He took off his hat and fetched his handkerchief out of it, and wiped his face.

"Aw, dear! to think I should have spent the blessed morning in scattering manure over the field, and now I shall have to go home and pick it up again, because 't is Sunday!"

Happy place, where life was a round of such sweet leisureliness!

Well, seeing West Tamerton was what it was, it is easy to imagine the sensation with which the news broke upon it one day concerning Mr. Michael Chigwidden. It was an alarm as of fire. Yet not to be told in a hurry, but to be lingered over, that the effect of it might be more overwhelming.

It was Martha Toms who carried the tidings to Betsy Crocker.

"You do knaw Michael Chigwidden, do n't 'ee?"

"Knaw Michael Chigwidden? Iss, of course I do."

"Michael Chigwidden *the tailor,* I do mean."

"Iss, of course. Well, what is it?"

"'T is n't the *old* Michael Chigwidden, the uncle to 'en?"

"Of course not; he 's dead."

"But it might have been, for all that. I 've a-heard strange tales of dead folks."

"What is it, then?"

"You never would have believed it, but 't is true."

"Well, I never!"

"You might have knocked me down with a feather, as the saying is."

"Aw!"

"I never thought it of 'en."

"Aw!"

"Why, *he 's going for to be married!*"

"Never!"

"And she 's so staid a female, too."

"Dear, dear! Well, there, to be sure; who to, then?"

"Why, to Petronel Varnicombe, the dress-maker.

"Well, I never did!"

And each was off in haste to carry the tidings to the less informed.

III.

HOW SUCH a matter ever came about was, indeed, very much of a mystery. It is true that Petronel Varnicombe sat directly in front of Michael Chigwidden in church. Thus was afforded opportunity for meditation such as the occasion is intended to promote; and if loftier things did not occupy the good man's mind, possibly it was the fault of the preacher. As Michael's eyes could not fail to see over the top of the Prayer-book, they had of necessity to look at the figure in front of them. There were the clusters of curls that peeped beneath the bonnet, tremulously keeping time as she joined in the psalms or kneeled for the responses.

The nearness of their pews afforded an excuse for a word of recognition that grew somewhat suddenly on his part into a tender inquiry as to her health. This without long delay passed to a handshake; and at last they walked together as far as their common way or the narrow pavement permitted.

So it came about that one evening Michael Chigwidden got up to close the shop at a quarter before eight—a change that implied something of terrible seriousness. Then he took off the loose carpet slippers, and put on his boots. He turned to view himself in the glass, giving the flat curls an extra twist and patting. He put on his hat, and boldly went forth to Petronel's house. To her it was a great astonishment to find that the knock was that of Michael Chigwidden. And while she expected only some passing message of a moment, she was still more surprised when he took off his hat and pushed his way into the little parlor.

Whatever passed between them we can only guess, but it was enough to set the rumor

afloat that Michael Chigwidden was going to be married to Petronel Varnicombe. Thus far they certainly had got.

Henceforth every evening, however busy she might be, even in the all-important matters of weddings or funerals, and although it involved setting to work again as soon as Michael was gone, and sticking at it until midnight, yet Petronel cleared her room and tidied it with utmost care. Every evening, a little before eight, she made the fire burn its brightest; she set some little dainty on the table for supper; she put the old arm-chair in the chimney corner; and then quietly waited the coming of her lover.

And every evening, on his part, Michael Chigwidden went forth at a quarter to eight, and hastily put up the shutters; he changed the big carpet slippers for boots that were carefully polished; he gave the flat curls on either side of his head an extra twist and pat.

As the chimes struck the hour of eight, never a minute before, never a minute after,

Michael boldly came into the dressmaker's little room. The greeting was sincere enough, but not enthusiastic, and then two hours slipped by pleasantly for both. It was a rest, a break, a change, without excitement, without expectation or claim. Every evening at the stroke of ten Michael rose and held out his hand, always with the same formula:

"Well, Petronel, what do 'ee say, then?"

The answer was always the same:

"Aw, Michael, let us bide as we be."

The weeks went by, the months, and even the years. But amidst the changes they brought nothing broke the constancy of Michael's visit. The formula was always the same, on his part and on hers. The very intonation of each word had grown fixed and unalterable.

It came at last to be said only because it had been said, and both would have been bewildered at its omission, and quite as much amazed at any change.

It was after the engagement had lasted seven years that a neighbor, anxious to get rid

of his house and furniture, thought that Michael Chigwidden would probably require some such convenient dwelling when he took to himself a wife. And surely that happy event could not fail now to be within measurable distance.

"Well, Mr. Chigwidden," he began, as he called at the tailor's shop, "I 've been thinking about you."

"Aw," said the tailor, "is it a new suit of clothes?"

"No, no, nothing of that sort. I am going away, you know, and want to get rid of my house."

"Well," replied Mr. Chigwidden, "what 's that got to do with me?"

"Why, I thought it would suit you very nicely."

"Me!" cried Michael; "whatever should I do with the place?"

"But I suppose you are going to be married soon, are you not?"

Michael gasped, his jaw fell, and beads of perspiration stood on his forehead. He

grasped the counter with each hand, as if to keep himself from falling.

"M—m—m—married!" he cried with horror.

"Yes, married," said the neighbor.

"W—w—w—whatever for?" stuttered the tailor.

"But you are engaged, are n't you?"

"Of course I am," said he, growing angry.

"Engaged to be married, I suppose?" said the neighbor.

"No," said the tailor, turning on his heel.

It took at least an hour for Michael to get over the shock, and it was another hour before he was able comfortably to sit cross-legged, and to resume his stitching. And even then he kept breaking out with indignant exclamations: "M—m—m—married! M—m—married! Whatever for?"

IV.

It was ten years since the engagement had commenced, when Michael Chigwidden, after

many weeks of deliberation and anxious discussions with Petronel, was induced to go to London to visit the Exhibition of 1862. Once away from West Tamerton, in the midst of the relatives with whom he was to stay, there was plenty to absorb his thoughts, and Petronel found no place amidst the excitement of the day. Worn out by the weariness of so much sight-seeing, at night he was asleep before her name could come into his mind.

But very different was it for poor Petronel. In her loneliness she missed him. Every evening, from mere force of habit, she put away her work, and she tidied up her room. Every evening she made the fire at its brightest and cheeriest; she set a place for two at the supper table, and put the arm-chair in the corner and waited. The clock struck eight, but no presence broke the monotony of the day. Never did the hours seem so long. Never were the evenings so dull. And as she thought of him now, it was altogether in another light. He was not merely a friendly visitor, but far more than he had ever seemed.

"Ten years!" she said to herself; "ten years! and his faithfulness has never wavered, his devotion has never changed—and every evening he has asked, and asked in vain."

She upbraided herself severely for never having seen before all that it meant to her now. She wondered that she could have withstood the claims of such affection. If he were but with her now, she almost thought it would be impossible to deny him anything. On his return she must give him some token of how deeply she felt his constancy, how warmly she had come to appreciate the devotion he had shown through all these years. There was but one fitting gift, and that should be his. She would at last consent to be his wife.

A fortnight expired, and Michael was home again. Eagerly that night he hastened to put up the shutters, and to put on his boots, for he had seen much and had a host of things to tell. He could not wonder at the warmer greeting with which Petronel welcomed him as he came into her room. For her to see him

once more in the easy-chair, and to feel the break that his presence brought, restored to her life a charm, and completed her determination fitly to reward the years of his love.

The two hours passed more quickly than ever. The incidents of the journey to London —in those times a rare thing for any person of West Tamerton—the sights and wonders he had looked upon in the Exhibition, all gave to the tailor, in Petronel's eyes, an added importance, almost, indeed, a greatness.

Then the old church clock chimed the hour of ten. Michael did not know it was so late, and rose in a hurry. He held out his hand, and hastily went through the familiar form of words:

"Well, Petronel, what do 'ee say, then?"

A new light shone in Petronel's eyes, the glow of a love that was almost a passion, an adoration, a great gratitude. Michael waited only for the familiar reply, and was eager to go. Punctuality had come to be to him almost a tyranny. But Petronel held his hand; and for a full minute there was a silence in which

one heard nothing but the ticking of the clock in the corner of the room.

Then she lifted her eyes to his, and even ventured what she had never done before—to set her arm about his neck.

"Michael, I 've been thinking."

Michael started and gasped, "Aw, my dear!"

Petronel misunderstood him, and found it an encouragment only more boldly to declare herself.

"I 've been thinking," she went on, "of the years of our love, and devotion."

"Never!" cried Michael tremblingly.

To Petronel still it was only the gladness of a man who finds at last what he has sought so long.

"I have resolved to consent to be your wife."

Michael snatched away his hand and thrust poor Petronel from him.

"N—n—n—never," he cried, and, without so much as staying to put on his hat, rushed through the street, and burst in at his door,

and scarcely felt himself safe, even when it was locked and barred.

It was a long time before he could sleep, and even in his slumber there came the muttered indignation: "M—m—married. Whatever for?"

The next day poor Petronel had no heart for anything. She sat with her breakfast untasted, utterly careless about her work for an hour or more. Some message of urgency aroused her at last, and she flung herself desperately at the dressmaking, and scarcely laid it aside for a moment. The night came, and eight o'clock found her still at her work. The fire had gone out, and the hearth was all unswept. Table and chairs were littered with the materials of her dressmaking. There was no need now to brighten the room, to set the cloth to get something dainty for supper, and to wait expectant and eager for Michael's coming.

But to Michael the day had been a weary one. He had taken down the shutters and prepared for the day's work with all his un-

erring precision. He had sat in his red slippers, cross-legged, stitching and snipping, but his thoughts were with Petronel. He sighed. How could he alter the habits of ten long years? What was he to do with his evenings?

That night, as the old church clock chimed the hour of eight, much to Petronel's amazement Michael rushed into the little room, and sat down without a word. The silence lasted for many minutes.

"Petronel," he sighed, "'t is no good, I can't live without you."

"Michael," said Petronel, "I can't live without you."

"I 've been thinking, Petronel." He paused again.

"Well, Michael," said she, after a silence of some minutes, "what have 'ee been thinking, then?"

It was a long time before the answer came.

"Well, Petronel, lev us bide as we be for the present, and then, please God, when we are dead, we 'll be buried comfortable in the same grave."

A BIT OF SHAMROCK.

A Bit of Shamrock.

I.

I HAD gone for a holiday in Ireland. It was one day when I was fishing that I made the acquaintance of Kathleen. An August day with every promise of fine weather.

I had driven on a jaunting car some five miles, intending to fish down to my hotel. On every side of me lay a great stretch of moor.

It needs a man to live in London to know the full luxury of the country. "Dahn in the country, governor, there 's room for to breeve," a dweller in the slums said one day.

It is precisely the feeling one has—room for to breathe. When one lives where there is nothing to be seen but the chimneypots opposite, and, by a cruel straining of the neck, a glimpse of smoke-stained sky above, it is almost as when the pilgrim lost his burden

that a man stands under the great stretch of heaven, about him the wide expanse of earth.

Not a sound was to be heard but the note of the curlew and the cry of the plover—the *pluvior,* the rain bird, which, I believe, is the meaning of the name. On this occasion, at any rate, it was a true prophet. Slowly there rose great masses of cloud that I knew meant thunder. The wind that had blown freshly when I started had quite died away, making fishing impossible anywhere but in the "stickles," as they are called in the West country; the broken water swift running over the stones or between them.

But even here my labor was lost; the fish were sulky and not to be tempted by any fly that I could offer them. I sat on a mossy rock, and ate my lunch, hoping to find them later in a better mood. My sketch-book afforded me a further entertainment for half an hour; then, suddenly, there blazed the lightning flash, and like "a whole sea overhead" there rolled the peals of thunder.

Trout, and perhaps fish generally, have a

way of asserting their independence of all traditions. That fish won't rise when thunder is in the air is a doctrine universally accepted.

Years ago I was wandering along the banks of a stream in Cornwall when I overtook a famous old fisherman—himself as rough and rugged as his home-made flies. I stopped with the instincts of a brother angler to ask him how he fared. He stuck the rod in the ground and lifted himself up. The rudeness of his remark I quote from the protest of an utter repudiation even whilst I chronicle it.

"Maister, they 'm *contrairy,* terrible *contrairy*—so contrairy as women!"

It was with some such contrariness that the fish were possessed that day. At the first burst of the storm up they leapt, greedy for the bait, fairly jostling one another, as one might say. My creel was full. The air was charged with electricity,—whether really or no I can not say, but it certainly seemed to me that some strange blue light played about the

metal parts of my rod. Then came the rain in huge drops, and in a very few minutes I was drenched to the skin.

The only place of shelter near was a cottage some quarter of a mile further down the river. I hurried on my way and knocked at the door.

It was opened by a woman whose age was difficult to tell, but the presence of a little girl of some ten years, shyly hid at her skirts, showed that she was not old, in spite of the deep lines which wrinkled her brow and furrowed her cheeks. A fine-built woman, with all the distinctive characteristics of the Celtic beauty—the jet-black hair streaked with gray. But of the face, one seemed to see nothing but the eyes, dark blue, shaded with long, black eyelashes, and the eyebrows a perfect arch.

The welcome was as prompt as it was warm-hearted, and given with the richness of the Irish brogue that, unfortunately, I am not skillful enough to reproduce.

I came in and sat by the great fire, on

which she piled an armful of turf. It seemed to be but one room, with a bed opposite the door. A pig and half a dozen lean chickens shared with me the shelter from the storm.

The husband, I found, had gone harvesting to England, but as she spoke of him I caught a tone of sorrow in her voice, and there came a troubled look into her eyes.

"Ah," I said, "I hope he brings you home money enough to keep you for the winter."

"Ach, yer honor," said she, "and he would if it were not for those about him. Niver a better man walked the earth than Pat Kilcoyn if he were only let alone. But thim that 's with him is just tirrible for the dhrink, and it 's *'no'* that he can not say whin they 're along wid him and his earnings is in his pocket. When we were first married we had just a sight of things to make a woman's heart proud, but they 've gone one by one. It fairly broke my heart to part with the brass bedstead that had been my mither's own. And there was Barney—blessed Barney."

Now it was that in the light of the peat-

fire, for the storm had darkened the air, I was struck with the pathetic beauty of the little girl's face. I had made friends with her, so that she had forgotten her shyness. I had bidden her bring a broken dish on which I set three or four trout. She leaned at my side greatly interested in turning the leaves of my fly-book. At the mention of Barney's name she stopped, lifting up her face to mine and taking my hand in hers as if assured that I should share her sorrow.

"And did you love Barney, Kathleen?" I asked, for that I found was her name.

The great blue eyes that were fixed on me melted into tears, the lips quivered, and she said nothing.

"Ach! an' she did that, yer honor," said the mother, "for Barney loved her like a born brother. You could fairly hear him laugh if she as much as spoke to him, and if she was away he looked as if the very sowl of him was gone."

I wondered who Barney could be to whom the drink had brought such ill.

"And who was Barney?" said I; "and what was the rest of his name?"

Then through Kathleen's tears there flashed the sunshine of her humor.

"It was only the donkey," Kathleen laughed with the tears on her cheeks, "but shure and I did love him."

"The poor baste," said the mother; "to think we should have had to part with him through the dhrink."

"Have you any other children?" I asked.

In a moment the mother drew herself up proudly, her eyes shone with a new light, and going towards the bed, she opened a chest and brought out a photograph carefully wrapped in a piece of newspaper.

"Shure, and that 's our Peter," said she, "and the Holy Virgin be praised, for he 's just the jewel of a boy."

"And where is he?" I said.

She evidently was glad to have the opportunity of dwelling upon the matter.

"Ach! and yer honor, the holy apostles themselves, not one of them, was ever more to

a poor mother's heart than my Peter has been to me. More like an angel than a boy, for all he was the merriest sowl that ever laughed, and could hold his own with the best of them. His lessons was larned that perfect, he was always the top of his school, and his riverence had a kindly pat for his head, and he would put his hand under his chin and lift up the pretty face of him to himself and say, 'Shure, and ye 've got your mother's eyes,' sez he. Sez he, 'You 're a broth of a boy, and if you stick to your books,' sez he, 'and grow up as good as you look,' sez he, "I 'll be after a-making a priest of ye,' sez he, 'and what will your mother say then?' sez he."

"Where is he now?" I asked.

"Shure, and he 's at college a-larnin' all sorts of wonderful things, and I 'm afther dreaming they 'll be making a bishop of him one of these days, yer honor."

The storm had cleared, and I rose to go. I had left the place, gladly handing some little acknowledgment to the good woman, which she refused to take for a while, and I

had at last to leave it on the rough dresser and hurry away.

I had not gone far before I heard a laugh close behind me, and turning round almost startled, I saw little Kathleen with her bare feet trotting at my side. She took my hand and danced and laughed for half a mile or more.

"Now, Kathleen," I said, "you must not come further, you know; your mother will think you are lost." She lifted her eyes and looked at me a moment as if in protest, then they shone again with merry humor.

"Och shure thin, yer honor, will ye promise one thing if I go back home now?"

"Certainly I will," I laughed, wondering what her request could be. "What is it, Kathleen?"

"That ye 'll come and see us agin."

"Of course I will," I said.

She kissed my hand and then was away with a run and a laugh. I had gone some hundred yards down the valley, when I heard a shout. She had climbed a rock at the bend

of the moorland path and stood on the summit, her skirts blown about the little bare legs, and her dark hair flying about her face, and she was waving a farewell with her hands.

II.

It was three days afterwards when I drove up to the head of the river again. No sooner was the jaunting car in sight of the cottage, than Kathleen came bounding to meet us. In a moment she sprang up at my side without waiting for the car to stop; her long limbs seemed able to jump anywhere, and were made to skip and dance, and anything else except to keep still.

"O, honor!" she cried, "dear honor," for this was the name by which henceforth she knew me. "What a long, long toime ye 've been."

And again her lips were on my hand.

I called at the cottage with a little present of tea for Mrs. Kilcoyn—such tea as I knew the Irish folks prefer, for there is nothing

about which your Irishman or Irishwoman is more fastidious. I have been told that the most expensive teas are sold in Russia and Ireland.

"Oi 'm glad yer honor has come," said she, "for the little one has been hungering for the sight of yez. She has spent ivery hour of the day wandering up and down the banks of the river, and it was as much as I could do to fetch her in to her dinner."

"I am sure I am as glad to see her," I said, as I felt her grasp tighten at my hand, for she had never once let it go, and the merry blue eyes were lifted up to me with the glow as of the sun itself.

The jaunting-car had gone back, and I was left on the river-side with Kathleen. We sat side by side on a mossy rock and shared our lunch.

"Now, Kathleen," I said, "I have got a present for you. It 's in my fishing basket. Can you guess what it is?"

She said nothing, only looked at me with a great wonder.

I had written to a friend in Dublin to buy me a doll, meaning only some bright-faced creature of the Japanese tribe in gay apparel. But there had come back a Saxon lady in the latest of Parisian fashions, and attired as a bride, with layers of dresses that I understood would take off, buttoned and tied and hooked and eyed; a white satin dress, so the ladies told me at the hotel, befrilled and belaced at neck and arms. A pearl necklace adorned her, and even bracelets as if of gold were on her wrists; and in a little box were other garments in which she was to rest at night when the great staring eyes were tightly shut.

Kathleen sat in perfect silence, with a gasp of wonder. Never had she possessed before a single plaything; and now it was as if the round world itself and all that therein is had come into her possession.

I left her and had gone on with my fishing, and it was nearly an hour later that I saw her at my side.

"O, honor!" she cried, "dear honor!" and

then sat down again to look afresh at the wonders of her gift.

Once more I left her, and after another long interval she came bounding to me. "You have forgotten one thing," she cried.

"What is that, Kathleen?" I said, afraid she had found something lacking in the gift.

"Shure and ye have not told me the name of her."

"O, I have not thought of that," said I; "let me see, what shall it be?" Then I remembered a huge wooden idol worshiped in former times by my own little ones at home, than which father and mother were scarcely more dear, whose name was Joan.

"Come," I said, "I think I 've got the name that will do," and I sat and told her the story of my children, and so the gift was named *Joan*.

A few minutes afterwards I looked round and Kathleen was gone. I concluded she had hurried on to show it all to her mother, and did not give the matter another thought until I chanced to look back, and saw the doll and

the box beside it carefully set on a stone. Some time afterwards, Kathleen, breathless with running, stood on the bank.

"O, honor, dear honor!" she cried, for I was wading in the stream, "will ye come here for a moment?"

As soon as I stepped out of the water, she drew me down towards herself with one hand, holding the other behind her back. Then she lifted the other hand and put in my button-hole a little bit of shamrock. She flung her arms about my neck.

"O, honor, dear honor!" she cried, and the tears shone in her eyes. "I love yez, I love yez, and I pray God every night to send His holy angels to take care of ye wheriver ye are. And night and morning I 'll tell Him about ye in my prayers. O, honor, dear honor!"

III.

WHEN next I went that way I really thought less about the fishing than about

Kathleen, for she had won her way into my innermost heart.

My excursion this time lay up to a mountain tarn, some three miles beyond the point which I had reached before.

I was no sooner in sight of the cottage than I saw the pretty little figure, barefooted and bareheaded, come dancing along to meet me. Again she sprang up at my side, her hand in mine.

This time there was no word of greeting, only a look of great gladness that filled all her face.

I feared to tell her of my errand, thinking that it was quite impossible for her to accompany me on my long walk to-day. Little by little I broke it to her, but there was no shade of disappointment. The distance was nothing to her; she was going, that was certain, wherever it might be. I called at the house to tell the mother, and found it a difficult thing to get away again.

"Och, yer honor," said Mrs. Kilcoyn, "what ye 've done for Kathleen ye niver can

tell. May God bless ye for the music ye 've brought to the sowl of her. It 's just a dream of beauty that ye 've given to her day and night. And every evening when she kneels at my side to say her bit of a prayer she tells the Holy God in heaven about ye, and asks Him to send His angels to guard ye, sleeping and waking, wheriver ye are."

It was a happy day, one of the happiest of my life. I waited whilst Joan was undressed, and the night things were put about her. Then Kathleen had given her a kiss, and told her to be good.

"Your little mother," said she, "must go away with dear honor for the day, but she 'll come back to ye afore the day is done, and, maybe, bring ye a trout for your supper that honor, dear honor, maybe, will give ye if ye 're good."

And she looked round at me, her eyes flashing with sly humor. Away we went hand in hand, up the steep climb, resting on our way now and then whilst I took out my sketch-book, and drew a rough picture of the land-

scape about us, and gave it to her, paid a thousandfold by the look of her love and the merry laugh—"O, honor, dear honor, I love yez."

Then we reached the little lake where fishermen were rare, and the fish, untrained in the ways of the wicked world, had learned no suspicion. I gave her my rod, and showed her how to cast the line, and the place rang with the music of her joy, as again and again she brought the spotted trout to the shore.

"That 's for Joan's supper, you know, Kathleen," I said, as she caught her first.

Again we came down the hillside, she gayly prattling of Peter, her brother, how good he was, and of how she loved him, and how that he was going to take care of his mother and herself that they should want for nothing; and how great he was going to be. So we reached the cottage.

Mrs. Kilcoyn was standing at the door. The postman had brought that day a letter from her son, and she held it open in her hand. Kathleen knew what it was, for no one else ever sent them a letter.

"Shure and yer honor," said the mother, "and would you loike to hear the letter that my boy, my Peter, has sent to his mother? Look at the handwriting of him, did ye ever see the like? And the way that he sez himself—it's foine."

Kathleen had run and given Joan a kiss, and whispered some words of praise for being so good, and then came back to my side whilst the mother slowly read the letter from Peter.

It told how that they were going to have a bazaar for the church, that each of the students had promised to make some contribution, and Peter was afraid that he would have nothing to give. His mother had nothing, he knew, and Kathleen still less, indeed if that were possible. And so with a pathetic helplessness he told his trouble, seeking rather their sympathy than their help.

When the letter was finished, we sat in silence, I wondering whether there were some little gift that could be sent from me in their name.

Then I felt Kathleen's hand slip from mine.

The light had gone out of her face—her eyes had a strange and far-away look.

She crept away to the door, and I saw her slowly pass the window.

A quarter of an hour later she came back, her eyes were red, there were marks of tears on her cheeks. She went to the bed, and took the doll, kissing it tenderly. She dressed it in all its finery, staying now and then to look at it and to kiss it again. She carefully folded all she had taken off, and put it into the little box.

Then she came to my side, her lip quivering as she spoke. "You won't mind," said she.

I saw, of course, what it meant, and could answer nothing.

She drew herself up and flung back her head, and taking the doll from the bed she put it in her mother's lap. Her lip was bitten; no word was spoken. Then Kathleen was gone.

A little later I rose to leave, begging Mrs. Kilcoyn's acceptance of some gift to send to her son, and went on my way.

I had gone some hundred yards or so from the house when I came upon Kathleen lying with her face to the ground in the long grass, sobbing, heart-broken. I laid my hand upon her shoulder, and she sprang up in a moment.

"Shure and it 's over now," said she, "and I 'm all right."

I sat down and took her on my knee. "O, Kathleen," said I, "I do n't know what to say or to do."

"O, honor, dear honor," said she, "you do n't mind, do ye?"

"Mind, little one," said I with a choke in my voice, "I think it is splendid of you—splendid."

"I knew ye would not mind, O, honor! dear honor," said she.

"Shall I give you anoher?" I ventured to whisper, timidly.

She was silent for awhile. Then came the far-away look again in her eyes. Presently she bent and kissed my hand.

"There can never be another," said Kathleen.

DICK BRIMACOMBE'S WEDDING.

Dick Brimacombe's Wedding.

I.

It was Uncle Abe who married them. You see, there was nobody else to do it; and, if there had been, the young folks would just have stuck to Uncle Abe. Whether you wanted to be christened, or married, or buried, you always sent for Uncle Abe; and when folks were sick or in trouble, you would be sure to see Uncle Abe's buggy standing outside the door—and a rough kind of thing it was, for Uncle Abe had to be his own carriage repairer, if not carriage builder, and there was very little of the original left. He made his own harness, cut from a cow hide. Everybody did that much—felled the timber, and built the house, and roofed it with shingles; but it was Uncle Abe who could mend your furniture, and set your plow right, and cure your aches, and cobble your shoes, and held that

nothing was worn out so long as it could be kept together by a bit of leather or a strip of bark.

He lived in what was then counted the backwoods of Canada, a place now as civilized as any old-fashioned town at home, where the latest advertisements cover the walls, and the latest fashions fill the drapery stores, and three daily papers record the latest news or invent it, as the case may be, availing themselves of the opportunity of contradicting it all in to-morrow's issue. But in the forties of the last century it was a wild spot, where there were so many wolves that nobody could keep a sheep. The old folks still tell how that, looking out of a window on a frosty night, they often saw a pack of wolves leaping over the logs and sniffing about the place. Here it was that a few hardy settlers had made a clearing and built each his wooden shanty. And here they lived their lives, rough and hard, but healthy and happy; and, however little they owned, it was all their own, which made it so much.

Uncle Abe was not exactly a minister. He never gave up business, and no man amongst them worked harder. His enterprise undertook much more than the care of his farm. He put his yoke of oxen to the wagon and drove ninety miles to Hamilton, carrying the skins that he had purchased from the trappers, and bringing home such things as tinware and earthenware, shoes and saddlery, stoves and drapery goods, which were collected in a lean-to at the side of his house, where the customers might call and get what they wanted.

A busy man indeed was Uncle Abe. In the springtime every maple-tree was tapped for sugar, and everybody in the family went hurrying to and fro with pails, and poured the luscious liquid into the boiler that stood in the clearing, or staid a moment to thrust a log into the fire to keep the pot boiling. In a good season he made as much as a thousand pounds of sugar, and sold it in exchange for wool, which the women of those days could card and spin and weave into blankets and shawls and dresses.

Now it was partly, perhaps, because he was so busy a man, always about hither and thither, that they gave him so much more to do. Partly because of that, but mostly because everybody knew him to be a good man. He was big and strong and utterly fearless, fearing God and then fearing nothing and nobody. Hard and narrow, it may be, in the view of some, when he found the evil doer, but all kindness and goodness when he came to deal with the sick and suffering. So it was that he was ordained a deacon in the Methodist Episcopal Church. He gathered the scattered population together in house or barn for preaching services. He baptized the babies, and married the couples, and buried the dead, and preached the funeral sermons, and did as much good as any Right Reverend Father in God. Payment for his services was mostly in kind. The sweet sentiment of lovers whose bliss was consummated by marriage found a grateful acknowledgment in the gift of a bear skin, and the peaceful burial of some old saint was requited by the skin of a wild wolf.

This was Uncle Abe who married Dick Brimacombe to Jessie MacDonald, and although they have all passed away, there stands to this day the maple-tree under whose branches the bride and bridegroom stood on that memorable day.

II.

DICK BRIMACOMBE, they said, would never marry; he was not a marrying man. That he was thirty-five years old, and had not sought a wife, was quite enough to settle the matter in the minds of the maidens who met at church or on the few and simple occasions when the settlers gathered at some festivity. He had come, a little lad, with his father and mother from the West country at home before he could remember. Indeed, there was but one memory that filled his boyhood's days; beside that all else was lost, behind that nothing else seemed to lie.

It was one day in winter, when he was some twelve or thirteen years of age, that he

had gone with his father into the woods to fetch the logs for fuel, a thing sorely needed where the cold often sank below zero. Dick's work was to drive the horses home with the load on the sleigh, and merrily rang his voice and the crack of his whip in the still and frosty air. On one of these journeys, as he drove along the rough track, a wolf ran from the bush and galloped snarling at his side. The horses, terrified, rushed madly away, and Dick had to hang on with all his might to keep from being flung off. The beast kept trying to leap upon him, and sprang, hideous with bloodshot eyes and open mouth from which the specks of foam flew as it ran, every now and then snapping its cruel teeth madly. Then suddenly an arrow from an unseen hand fled straight at the beast and killed it instantly. An Indian to whom they had shown some kindness had caught sight of it, and thus saved the lad. It was a mad wolf that had broken away from the rest of the pack and roamed by itself—a creature far more fierce than any other, since the venom of its madness meant that the least

touch of its teeth—and some said even the scratch of its claw—meant certain death, and that perhaps the most terrible death that a man can die.

The Indian hastened to tell the father of the son's peril and escape, and as they returned together to the place where the dead wolf lay Dick joined them.

"Well," said the old man, when he had heard the story from both of them, and given the Indian all the tobacco he had, "we will have his skin, anyhow. He shall do some good now he is dead, which is more than he did when alive. The boy shall have that for his own."

Taking out the knife that hung from his belt, he proceeded to skin the beast. But he was all unmindful that his hands were chapped with the cold. It cost him his life. A fortnight later he died of hydrophobia.

From that hour the boy became a man. His was all the hard work of the place; his the burden of anxiety in the struggle to live. And bravely he carried his load. Utterly absorbed

in his work, he grew old before his time, and as he passed through the years of his early manhood life had no room for sentiment, no leisure for love, except in the tender care and unceasing devotion which he showed to his mother.

The life of those days in those parts was by no means lacking in opportunity for courtship. No hired help could be had then, and the neighbors gathered at each other's houses in turn to lend a hand at all that required any extra help. And on such occasions Dick Brimacombe came gladly enough to do his share of work. There was a Raising-bee, when a man wanted to put up a barn, and every neighbor brought a horse or a yoke of oxen to drag the timber and then help to put it in its place. There was a Logging-bee, when they gathered to bring the logs to the fire, and made ready the potash, the only thing for which they got paid in cash; all else was a matter of barter. There was the Paring-bee, when they made ready the apples and pumpkins for winter use.

Such occasions were always finished by a great supper, at which as many as fifty or sixty guests would gather, and this was followed by all kinds of merry games. Then they drove home in wagons or sleighs. But Dick Brimacombe seldom staid to supper, and never to the merry-making afterwards. There was nobody else to see to the cows and to set things right for the night, and his mother sat by the lonely fireside; so before anybody knew it he was gone. Little wonder the maidens had come to think of him as not a marrying man.

But old Mrs. Brimacombe had died, and there had come changes that quickly told on Dick. The evenings were long and lonely as he sat now after supper when the day's work was done, and there was nobody to cook his victuals and to see to his buttons. A hundred discomforts began to meet him which only a woman's hand could set right, if he could but find the one that suited him, one who could do all these matters as his mother had done.

The chance soon came, and Dick took it eagerly. It was at a Paring-bee, where the

neighbors for half a dozen miles around had come together to pare and prepare the apples for the winter. It was as pretty a sight as one could wish to see—the men busy picking the ruddy apples from the trees and filling the baskets, then emptying them in piles where the groups of maidens sat laughing and chatting merrily, one skillfully peeling the apples, another quartering them, whilst yet another threaded the pieces with a needle on a fine string some yard or two long, these later to festoon the kitchen and thus be dried for winter use. The fallen leaves of the trees already littered the orchard, whilst the maple stood ablaze with gold and deepest crimson hues.

Amongst the girls was one more quiet than the rest, to whom Dick Brimacombe brought his basket more than once, and then lingered watching her hands as skillfully and swiftly she pared the apples. If it had been any other of the men, there would certainly have been some laughing pleasantry about it, but it was only Dick, and nobody took any notice of him —nobody, that is, except Jessie MacDonald

herself. She, seated on the ground, her lap full of apples, turned her head and met the eager look of Dick, and at once had read the secret. With a blush on her cheek, she bent her face low down and went on more busily with her work.

Then Dick flung himself down at her side. "Let me help you," he laughed, and taking an apple out of her lap, he began to eat it. The others looked; but there, it was only Dick Brimacombe, and he did not count from a girl's standpoint.

The early supper was over, and all were taking part in the games. Dick, unused to games and awkward at merry-making, had strolled away into the orchard again. The great harvest moon was rising over the distant woods. Presently he caught sight of Jessie leaning against a fence watching the moon rise. He little guessed how hardly she was trying not to think of what filled all her thoughts. His coming startled her. He was at her side before she had caught sight of him. For a few moments they stood in silence.

"I want to have a Paring-bee," said Dick.

Jessie said nothing, only turned her head towards him, hoping that he had not seen the blush that filled her face, and glad to notice that he was looking at the moon.

"I guess it would be a new kind of Paring-bee, too."

Jessie looked up with a questioning wonder.

"I am only going to ask one—a sort of Queen Bee," Dick went on.

Jessie's eyes fell, and she grasped the fence nervously.

"And when she comes I want her to stay and see the apples dried, and then to cook them, and help to eat them too."

Jessie beat the fence timidly with her foot. Then Dick slipped his arm in hers. "Jessie, will you be my Queen Bee?" The little hand slipped into Dick's big ones. For a minute there was silence, except as the crickets chirped in noisy chorus; but Dick heard the words, almost whispered, "Do you mean it,

Dick?" Then he sealed the bargain with a kiss, and it was settled.

"We shall have to be quick about it," said Dick, as they came to the house again. "Apples won't keep long this season, I 'm afraid.

So Dick Brimacombe was going to be married.

III.

It was within a very few weeks of the Paring-bee that there came the wedding. There was no need for delay, and Dick thought there was much need for haste; so they had seen Uncle Abe and fixed it all with him. They had got the license, and the day was fixed when at the nearest little church the friends were to gather and the marriage was to take place. The autumn had passed into the early winter, and there had come a great storm of wind and rain. All night the wind blew, and all night the rain pelted. Dick slept soundly as only a tired man can; but

Jessie lay awake half the night listening to the roar of the blast in the woods, moaning and howling, and to the beat of the rain. How could she get to church in the simple finery in which she was to be decked? And then a new horror seized her. What if the river were swollen, and Uncle Abe could not cross to marry them? She slept, but it was only to dream that she was being swept away in some fierce torrent in which Dick struggled vainly to save her. The day broke with dull, heavy clouds on every side; no sign of any clearing was there, and the rain came down with a steady and persistent beat as if it would never cease. Later, they met at the church, the bride and bridegroom, with a few of her friends. Dick had no relatives that he knew of in the world, and was his own best man.

But there was no Uncle Abe. The wind roared about the little church, then went howling into the woods like a thing in pain. In gusts the rain beat on the window panes. The little company sat waiting in silence, when one

came into the church with the news that Uncle Abe was on the other side of the river and could not come across. The stepping-stones were buried several feet below the raging flood. There was no chance of any wedding to-day. They must go home again and wait until the flood was over.

"Never," said Dick; "we 'll manage it somehow."

Forth went the bride and bridegroom to the bank of the river, where Dick set Jessie in the shelter of the big maple-tree and then called across to Uncle Abe.

The rush and roar of the torrent was the deep bass to the howl of the wind, and it was difficult for him to hear his own voice as he shouted, "What 's to be done, Uncle Abe?"

"Nothing, I guess, my son," said Uncle Abe. "I 'm just awful sorry. I should have to go miles up the river before I could cross it, and it would take me all day."

"Dick," whispered Jessie, close at his side, "ask him if he can't manage it standing over there."

"Say, Uncle Abe," bawled Dick with all his might, "can't you do it over there?"

"What?" shouted Uncle Abe, and Dick had to say it over again before it was heard.

"I do n't see how I can," and Uncle Abe scratched his head. "I can't marry you without the license."

"Dear, dear!" said Dick, helplessly.

"We can manage the license all right," said Jessie. "Take your handkerchief and put a big stone in it, and the license, and you can fling it across."

"That 's just grand," said Dick. "I should never have thought of that," and a minute later the thing went flying across the river to Uncle Abe.

"Well, we can try it anyhow," roared the deacon, as he came to the brink of the river and stood in the pelting rain. "Come as near as you can."

So the service began. Now the words rang out clear and distinct as in a church, then again nothing could be heard. But

Uncle Abe struggled on with his part, and Dick was not to be beaten.

"Say after me, Dick," roared Uncle Abe, *"I know not——"* For a moment it was useless to struggle with the roar of the storm. Then he began again, "I know not any just cause——"

Dick got safely through his part, but it was in vain that Jessie tried to make her voice heard across the river.

"I can't hear," roared Uncle Abe, leaning across the surging flood, and holding his hand at his ear.

"She said it right enough," yelled Dick.

"We heard her," said the little group about the maple-tree; "we can swear to that."

There was a pause, and the whole matter seemed in peril. Then Uncle Abe roared across to them, "Hold up a hand, my dear. I guess that will do under the circumstances."

And up went Jessie's hand.

"Dick Brimacombe, wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?" cried Uncle

Abe, and then stood listening, his hand against his ear. But there was no need for that. Dick put both his hands to his mouth, and in a tone that might have defied Niagara's thunder, roared, *"I will!"*

"Guess Uncle Abe heard that right enough," said the group to each other with a smile. Then Uncle Abe began again.

"Jessie, my dear, it 's your turn now. Can you hear?" Jessie nodded her head.

"Jessie MacDonald, wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband?" But it was in vain that poor Jessie tried to get her words across.

"She says she will, right enough," said Dick, impatiently.

"But I 've got for to hear it," cried Uncle Abe.

"Let her hold up her hand," pleaded Dick.

"Well, then, Jessie, my dear, hold up a hand if you mean it."

"Hold up both," whispered Dick.

"You 've got hold of one," said Jessie.

"Well, I 'll hold up this one, and you hold up the other," laughed Dick; and up went both Jessie's hands high in the air.

"Have you got the ring?" cried Uncle Abe.

"Here it is, Uncle," Dick roared, holding it up.

"Well, put it on. Jessie will show you the finger."

"All right, Uncle Abe. What next?"

"Hold it there, and say after me——"

Now it was whilst Dick's hands were busy in this part of the ceremony that there came a violent blast, which sent Dick's hat flying before it and dropped it into the surging stream. It was Jessie's old aunt who flung a big black shawl over Dick's head and accidentally covered them both.

"All right," roared Uncle Abe. "That will do."

And Dick took the opportunity, whilst hidden in the shawl, to give his wife a kiss that sealed the wedding, as a kiss had sealed the engagement.

"God bless you, my children," said Uncle Abe, as he crawled into his buggy. "I guess you 're tied up all right."

"Thank 'ee, Uncle Abe; I 'll owe you a bear skin," roared Dick.

"Come and see us soon," said Jessie, but the words failed to get across the river. They were lost in the roar of the flood and the howl of the storm.

THE PUNCH AND JUDY MAN.

The Punch and Judy Man.

He was an old man. The long practice of his work had left his voice cracked; whilst exposure in all winds and weathers had brought on bronchitis, and he wheezed and coughed as he told his story.

The pan-pipes were lying in the window. In a corner of the room a green box was open, where Judy sprawled with an arm and leg over the side; the baby, with a huge white cap, was on its back staring with great eyes at the ceiling. A whiskered policeman lay face downwards, whilst in another corner Punch, with a leer of satisfaction, sat bolt upright.

Old and worn, like his master, Toby thrust a cold nose in my hand as I sat and listened.

"If I knows anything at all I knows the British public, and what I says is this—

amoose your public, and your coppers is there, more or less, for a dead certainty. But titch their morals and you 're up a tree before yer knows where ye are, so sure as eggs is eggs. I knows what I 'm a-talking about, for I went into the moral line myself once, and never did a wuss day's work.

"It was all along of a coorate—a nice sort of a chap he were, for he and me come to be a bit friendly arterwards. Wide-awake, too, and, as I told him once, he could 'ave got along in my line of business if he 'd a mind to—and a prettier compliment I could n't pay the king, not if it was his coronation.

"It was back years ago when they was beginnin' to put up schools for the kids. I was only a young chap myself, and had n't long started in the Punch and Judy line. Well, this 'ere coorate had got some children in a shed, a set of wild gels and boys. He managed to tame 'em a bit, but the school-pence was the trouble—they were mostly missing, with some of the children anyhow. He did n't want to send them away; 'specially

as he could n't prove that the kids 'ad a-stolen them.

"It was in his trouble he turned to me. I was a performin' one day down the Highway, when I sees through a hole in the canvas that I keeps a purpose for peepin', a parson in the crowd a lookin' on enjoyin' it as much as anybody else. Well, I 'd picked up the coppers and tucked up the show when this here coorate comes up along side o' me.

" 'Well, Governor, what do you want?' says I, with a grin. 'Do you think I could draw a congregation some fine Sunday mornin'? I 'm game if you can secoor the patronage of the nobility and clergy for my 'umble show. I could give it a religious turn for a consideration, and to oblige. Come 'ere, Toby,' I says, for he was inspectin' the coorate's legs suspicious like.

"Says 'e, 'I want you to do something of that sort, not in the church, but in the school. I will make it worth your while, say 'arf a crown,' says 'e. 'Come down next Wednesday arternoon, and I will give you a list of

names of children that I sispect of stealin' the school-pence, and you can put in a word or two that will cure them,' says he.

"'All right, Governor,' says I, and I chuckles to myself with a sort of pride that I and my show was a goin' into the moral line.

"Well, the day come, and there I was, punctual as Big Ben. It were a sight to see them kiddies all took up in the show, never a-suspectin' the bomb-shell that was a-goin' to be let off among 'em. You could hear the peals of laughter a-ringin', and they with their eyes a-starin' wide and their mouths open for to let out all the laugh that was in 'em. Then up comes Judy with the baby in her arms. I thought I 'd begin gradual like, so I peeps out of the little hole in the canvas, and, after Judy had sung a bit of a song, says I, 'O, you are just a nice little, pretty little, dear little, good little baby you are—the image of your par and mar.'

"Then I gives a solemn pause and puts on the moral, 'When you are big enough, you

will go to school,' says I, 'won't ye, and you 'll learn your lessons beautiful!' says I. Then slow and solemn says I, *'you'll never steal your school-pence!'*

"I was sorry for the kids, I tell yer. There came a hush over 'em that yer might have heard a pin drop. A fair half turned quite white and peeped round to see if anybody were lookin' at 'em. The coorate stood bolt upright and went on laughin', like as if he did n't sispect nothin'.

"Well, the show was done—and I made it special strong and long for their benefit, puttin' in every song I could think of, besides a hextra 'arf hour of patter. When they thought it was all over, up jumps Punch again with his stick in his hand."

As the old man spoke he leaned over to the box and took Punch up and fixed the big staff firmly in the wooden arms.

"I 'll show you, Governor, how I done it. Ye see, I 'd got their names on a piece of paper."

In the familiar, squeaking voice of Punch,

that rang out harsh and shrill, he went through the list of names.

"Peter Jones! whack—and down came the stick and up came Peter Jones, white as a sheet and all of a tremble—you could see the perspiration on his forehead. William Robinson, whack—down came the stick again, and he came a-draggin' himself along. Harry Smith, whack—and poor Harry come gaspin'.

"So come ten of 'em, all in a row in front of the stand. Then to make a sort of a flourish, I put in cetera, cetera—Punch lookin' round the place and comin' down with a couple of whacks. Blest if there were n't six others whose names were n't down at all that come up and stood alongside of the rest.

"Then Punch he puts on all his tones so solemn as a judge. 'Boys and gels,' says 'e, 'you 've just seen a man hanged by the neck till 'e was dead! dead!! dead!!!' Once more the stick came down with a terrible whack. 'That man began his downward career a-stealin' of his school-pence. And, boys and

gels, if you ever steal your school-pence again, you will every one of you be hanged by the neck till you are dead! dead!! dead!!!

"The coorate tipped his 'arf crown and says 'Well done,' says he, and I goes on my way very well pleased with the arternoon's work. But it were the worst job I ever did. I met him six weeks after, and says I, 'Coorate,' says I, 'you 've a-ruined my business for me. I never show my face in a street but every boy and gel takes to their heels as hard as they can go. Says they, 'That there man 'ave a-got in his box somebody that knows everything yer ever did."

"Yes, I knows the British public if I knows anything. Amoose 'em and their coppers is there—but titch their morals, and they are froze solid."

DOWN IN THE COUNTRY.

Down in the Country.

"I say, Missus, we must go down in the country and see the kid."

The woman started and stared. It was n't much he cared for the poor little girl, kicked and cuffed by him when drunk, as he often was, and half-starved because of what he spent in the public-house.

"What do you say, Missus?" he asked, wondering at her apparent reluctance.

To her it was difficult just then to find any words to speak of it.

Down in the country. She knew it well. It was where they both came from, and she saw instantly the little house with its garden amid the brightness of the flowers and the singing of the birds.

The man had taken out his pipe and filled it, and now with the match in his fingers, he

all were in such utter contrast with the coarse surroundings of their home.

In the doorway of one of the cottages stood their little girl, her face beautiful with the gladness she had found, and now she came running down the garden path to meet them.

"My!" said the man, almost with a gasp, "ain't she pretty!"

They came in and sat down, but the man was restless and uncomfortable. He ate little and said less, and seemed in a hurry to get back to town again. His wife wondered that he sat in such silence that night at home. Presently he rose and paced about the one room in which they lived. There was a strange new tone in his voice as he spoke, "I say, Missus, we must try and make her miss it as little as we can. We can do the place up a bit," and his eyes went over the floor and along the walls.

Next night he came home from work bringing with him a parcel.

"I 've been thinking about the kid," he

explained, "we 'll put this over the bed. It will help to make it look a bit better," and he shook out a white coverlet and set it tenderly over the rags in the corner.

Then, taking off his coat, he set to work, mending here and patching there, whilst his wife took up the coat and began to patch and to mend that.

"I 'm going to make her miss it so little as she can," he said, as he drew himself up, proudly admiring his own handiwork. The wife, for her part, was glad enough to fall in with the proposal, and did her share in a score of ways, until the place was quite transformed.

On the Saturday he came home straight from work. "Now, Missus," he cried, "we 'll have our tea, and then we 'll go out a-marketing." They bought a hearth-rug—a splendid specimen covered with cabbage roses—large and red as a setting sun. Then two or three cheap pictures that they picked up from a stall, and these adorned the walls.

"My!" said he, as he looked about the

place, "she won't hardly know it." And then there were touches added here and improvements made there.

The day the little one was to come home they went out and bought a fuchsia in a pot; they had never bought a flower before. It was evening when the child returned. They stood waiting for her in such finery as they could afford, and which they thought befitting the occasion. The little one stood and looked at them both in amazement. Then she came into the room and gazed about her. The hearth-rug, the white coverlet on the bed, the fuchsia on the table, the pictures on the wall, the supper so nicely set out, all filled her with wonder. "Whatever have you been a-doing of," she cried, "it 's 'most so pretty as down in the country."

The man sat down, and there was a bit of a choke in his voice. "Little 'un, come here." He put his arms about her; he had never done it before. He kissed her, awkwardly, for he was out of practice, but he did it. Then he explained, "You see your mother

and me wanted to make you miss it all so little as we could."

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So came a breath of the country, like the breath of God's own love turning "Little Hell" into a little heaven.

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